



MINUTES OF MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

At the Village Hall at 20:00 Thursday, July 13, 2023

Members Present

Chair	Jim Donahue
Members	Diana Smith Katherine Higley Paul O'Grady Frances Parkes

Officers Present:

Clerk, RFO	Jane Yamamoto
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Public and Press: Henley Standard, 4 residents

The meeting started at 20:00.

- 1 **Apologies for absence & Mission Statement** 20:00
Cllr Dragonetti sent his apologies.
- 2 **Declaration of Interests**
There were no declarations.
- 3 **Public Forum** – an opportunity for members of the public to express their point of view on any item on the agenda. 20:05
- 3.1 Dr. Graeme and Mrs. Rosemary Pearce noted that the Remembrance Service Sunday at the War Memorial was well attended. They proposed to provide the costs of both a bench and the installation of one located on the path on the Eastern side of the road up Whitchurch Hill half-way between the top of the hill and the war memorial. This might be welcome for both the attendees of the service as well as the many walkers up this path.
The Chair said that he would contact the OCC Countryside Officer to approve this location and provide the details of an installer that might save costs.
The bench would become an asset by the Parish Council so that it would be covered by its insurance. The Pearces did not want to have any plaque, just a plain FSC approved bench. The Chair proposed that the residents meet with some of the Councillors at the site and have a motion once OCC has given their approval. The residents would hopefully like this in place for the November service.
Action 193– The Chair will contact OCC and the Pearces for a site meeting.
- 3.2 Tim Hardwick proposed for The Phone Box on the High Street to have a collecting box for empty medicine blister packs as they cannot be recycled. He would collect them and give them to Superdrug in Reading to TetraCycle for separation and recycling. As he already checks the defibrillator once a month and checks the books are tidy, he could easily collect any blister packs as well.
A Councillor recommended that he contact the surgery as they did have a scheme, but it fell through. It was also suggested that the website could advertise this.

Parish Council Vacancy – we have had some interest in the vacancy but the person interested would like to wait until September to confirm so I am suggesting that we extend the vacancy deadline until the end of August and review the application at the September meeting.

OCC Open Day – I attended an OCC open day at Council office in Oxford with a number of other Parish Councillors from the county. We received updates from a number of organisations:

- New CEO Martin Reeves – had a lot of energy and wants to break down silos to get OCC teams to work together to be solution focussed and to speed up delivery.
- Mark Priddy from Oxfordshire History Centre who maintains archives for Parish Councils in St Luke's Church in Cowley. This includes all signed minutes, title deeds, and accounts more than 7 years old.
- Oxfordshire emergency planning team and receive some useful leaflets. They recommended we use the SSEN grant for first aid training.
- Countryside team – Mike Waller and Steve Tabbitt. They explained their CAMS tracking system which may help us to prioritise issues
- Highways – Sean Rooney in charge of Highways Maintenance Services
 - Potholes - He highlighted the progress they made, including 47,000 defects repaired in 2022/23, including 16,296 dragon patches with their two dragon patchers. but said the last winter was unusual in that it resulted in 40% more pot holes that usual due to: "Long cold winter, wet spring, followed by frost'.
 - 20 mph - TVP required it to be self enforcing. Confirmed that Community Speedwatch is the recommended approach for enforcement.
 - Drains – also highlighted the CAMS and MS DI systems to log these, above and beyond Fixmystreet. I will look into these to see if we can get better results with drainage clearing.

Other activities:

- Thames Path sign - I worked with Neil Huntington to repair the bent Thames Path sign by the Toll Booth.
 - This involved a lot of digging and the use of some fast drying cement. The bent part of the sign is beneath the soil so the repair looks fine from the surface.
 - I had reported this over a year ago to OCC Countryside Access team. They did repair other signs including the new Hartley Steps sign. This repair was given lower priority.
 - When I attended the OCC Open Day, the Countryside Officer said that they had a backlog of nearly 4,000 lower priority items which included things like bent signs. I notified the Countryside team of our work and they were pleased and closed the item on their side.
- Hillside loose step - A resident of Hillside notified me of a loose step on the path in front of Hillside that could be dangerous. They reported it to Fix My Street. I notified them that we would also log it as a residents issue and keep it open until it is resolved. Given the backlog at OCC, I will see if I can find a local volunteer to help fix it.
- Greyhound bins - I have contact the Greyhound and they will investigate whether they can clear out the garage and fit the bins there. They also say that there is no reason for us to purchase another bin on the High Street, they will put a sign up asking people to use the bins provided.
 - Village Green signs and bins – thanks to Cllr Parkers for her work to install new signs on the Village Green:
 - CCTV signs to improve security at the Pavilions
 - No BBQ signs on the fence to address reports of BBQs, especially in the hot dry weather.
 - Proposal to move the bin and bench from west sign of Football goal to the east side

Eastfield House update – The latest update I have received from the Urban Villages program director was on 10th of July. He confirmed that J Guest Ltd was selected as the contractor for the project and they planned to start work on the site by the end of July.

- The bat survey was completed and they expected to receive the bat licensee from Natural England within 28 days of validation which happened on 4th July.
- A number of enabling activities will start this month are not dependent on the bat survey. The main activities that are linked to the bat survey are demolition of sensitive parts of the main building that could impact bats.
- The enablement work will include:
 - Clearing the road frontage and overgrown gardens
 - Installing bat mitigation measures
 - Improving security measures including CCTV and fencing along the eastern boundary
 - Removing asbestos
 - Demolition of garage block
- Muddy Lane – Cllr Smith updated that an application for the Adverse Possession should be submitted in the next few weeks.
- Cllr O’Grady was chasing SODC to return with a response for an update for the Planning Application for the Walled Garden.

5 To approve minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council meeting of June 8, 2023.

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the minutes.

6 Planning Applications – to discuss and agree Council’s response to the following:

20:30

6.1 P23/S1836/LB

4 Whitchurch House, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EP

Replace three ground floor windows with timber double glazed sash windows to match the design of existing.

Resolution: The Council voted to support this application.

6.2 P23//S1484/DIS

BP Technology Centre Bozewood Drive near Whitchurch Hill RG8 7QR

Discharge of Conditions 6 (Tree Protection), 9 (Constructions Traffic Management), 10 (Construction Method Statement – 2) and 16 (Archaeology WS) under application reference number P22/S3223/FUL (The demolition of buildings; the erection of a new part single storey, part two storey building for the research / testing of electric battery technology and associated test chambers; and the erection of buildings and compound for storage and other ancillary facilities).

Resolution: The Council voted to submit a comment that Condition 16 needs to be reviewed.

6.3 P23/S2145/DIS

Coombe Park, Coombe Park Road, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7QT

Discharge of conditions 6 (glass coating or external glazing) & 8 (tree protection) on planning application P22/S1324/FUL (The erection of a replacement dwelling and associated works).

Resolution: The Council voted to submit a comment for support of the Forestry Officer’s comments.

6.4 P23/S2277/DIS

Coombe Park, Coombe Park Road, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7QT

The application is for: Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) on application P22/S1324/FUL (The erection of a replacement dwelling and associated works) - to allow for design changes to the house.

Resolution: The Council voted to submit a comment that there is no objection to these design changes.

7 To receive reports from the representatives of Oxfordshire County Council and South Oxfordshire District Council 20:40

7.1 SODC District Councillor Report – Cllr Dragonetti (Attachment 1)

7.2 OCC County Councillor Report - Cllr Bulmer (Attachment 2)

8 **Finance:** 20:45

8.1 To approve the payment schedule for July:

Payment	Sub-total	VAT	Total
Staff expenditure			£506.80
SODC (Admin fee for Uncontested Election)			£200 BACS
Scofell	£739.98	£148.00	£887.98
ICO			£40 SO
The Sign Shed			£16.07 DD
Chair (expense for cement for the repair to the Thames Path sign)			£12.95
OALC (course for Vice-Chair)	£80.00	£16.00	£96.00

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the payments.

8.2 Receipts:

Receipts:	Amount

8.3 Bulletin – Herald Graphics increased costs – Cllr Donahue (Attachment 3)

The Chair reported that the prices had been fixed for one year but the energy and paper costs had increased by 18%. He said he was happy with the quality and the service they were providing. Overall, the Parish Council were paying less than with the previous printer because we are now receiving commissions on advertisements. These new prices would be fixed for another year.

9 Motion For the Parish Council to apply for SSEN Community Resilience Funding for the Community First Aid courses – Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Smith 20:50

9.1 The Chair had received a proposal from a resident of Hardwick estate to support a first aid training course for residents on botas and other parts of the community. The need for residents with first aid skills fits very well with the village Community Emergency Plan to have First Aid Training for residents. The proposal was for £1,350 for about 10 residents to attend a 2 day course. Spaces on the course will be advertised for residents who are willing to be listed in the Emergency Plan to be called upon if needed in an emergency.

Resolution: The Council voted to support this motion.

10 Motion to approve for the Parish Council to adopt an Asset Maintenance Register which details the assets that belong to the Parish Council, what maintenance they need and when – Cllr Higley seconded by Cllr Smith 21:00

10.1 A Councillor outlined that there were benches, for example, on the Village Green, that require maintenance. They will circulate a draft list of assets.

Resolution: The Council voted to support this motion.

11 Cricket Pavilion update – Cllr Donahue 21:05

11.1 The Chair reported that the Cricket Club had not agreed to the Heads of Terms and now decided that they didn't want to transfer the pavilion to the Parish Council and proposed that they only transfer ownership of the Tea Hut to the Parish Council instead. They said that they would be upgrading the pavilion in the near future and suggested that the Parish Council would still support this as well.

Cllr Donahue raised a few points:

- It is now clear that the Pavilion cannot be used for community events whilst it remains under WCC ownership:
 - WCC will not assume liability for members of public in the Pavilion, and the PC Insurance company cannot provide cover for residents in the building which we do not own.
 - WCC recently asked the PC to pay a large annual 'access fee' which was not cost effective.
 - Electricity, toilets and other facilities in the pavilion continue to be sub-standard and unsafe.
- If we are to take ownership of the Tea Hut:
 - We should focus our efforts on making it something that could be used by the community and would probably not be able to support pavilion refurbishments as well.
 - It would not seem cost or time effective to have a full HoT for just the Tea Hut, so we should keep this agreement as simple as possible.
- Cllr Donahue outlined a scenario to replace the tea hut that other councillors agreed in principle:
 - Demolish the old building
 - Build a low cost, pre-constructed shed/hut with space to store plastic chairs, some tables, and perhaps a small marquee for outdoor events on the Village green
 - Upgrades power and water access
 - Include small Kitchen area for making tea
 - Portaloos would need to be ordered for events.

Cllrs agreed that focussing on a tea hut replacements would allow us "to control our own destiny" without further dependencies on the WCC. The Clerk reminded

councillors that OCC grant money was received for the demolition of the Tea Hut that the Parish Council could now use.

The Chair would ask for the ownership of the Tea Hut to be transferred to the Parish Council. A motion would be proposed in September.

- 12 Vexatious Policy – Cllr Parkes 21:15
- 12.1 Cllr Parkes updated the Council on the manner of some communications that could be deemed as vexatious and repetitive. This was the reason for the proposal for a written document.
Helpful comments from other members of the Council have been incorporated and they will circulate this for a Motion in September.
There were other discussions about GDPR issues. Informally, she consulted legal counsel and a governor on a School Board of Governors about sharing these confidential communications within the Council and that it would not go any further. It was suggested, for example, that a footer be used on both the Clerk and Councillor emails that said that any correspondence, by whatever means, may be shared in confidence within the Council.
- 13 Village Green Update – Cllr Parkes 21:30
- 13.1 Cllr Parkes thanked all for reading the emails concerning the increased fire risk to the Village Green during the hotter months when there was a BBQ on the green.
The owner of the paddock reported that rubbish was thrown over the fence. They asked if the bench and the bin could be placed on the other side of the green. This might discourage any incursions. The bench could be moved to the right-hand side of the football goal. Cllr Parkes has been emptying the bin weekly and confirmed that it was well used. The owner was grateful for all the Parish Council’s efforts. There was concern that there would be increased rubbish on Muddy Lane.
Another Councillor asked if there was an update to the gate and right of access along the fence on the Village Green. Cllr Parkes had informally consulted legal counsel. Another Councillor reported seeing weekly access use of this gate. It was not there previously. The Clerk reminded that there was £1,500 grant for the Village Green fence. The owner will not contribute to any upgrade to the fence and will not agree to take down the barbed wire after the rubbish was thrown over.
- 14 To review progress on any open actions from previous Parish Council meetings and agree any revision of actions on the action list.
- 15 To confirm the date and time of the next meetings is Thursday, September 14, 2023 20:00. 21:20
- 16 Confidential discussion for thank you notes from the Parish Council.
- 17 Meeting closed. 21:35

Attachment 1

Report to Whitchurch Parish Council July 2023 New Offices

The long awaited replacement office for the building burnt down nearly 8 years ago is moving forward, with the latest design published. The building is to be located in Didcot, opposite the station and will contribute to the regeneration of this area. The new design has been reduced to four stories from five, and the outside of the new building will include a large 'living wall', which will align the building closely with the garden town principles and support biodiversity. The wall will have climbing plants growing from ground level and up the side on stainless steel wires, improving the building's sustainability.

Riverside Pool and Splash Pad - Crowmarsh

The heated swimming pool by Wallingford Bridge is now open, and also at the same place is a new Splash Pad with various features, such as water arches, activators children can use to trigger water sequences, a whoosh shower and Sky drenchers and more. There is no entrance fee to the splash pad or booking required. However booking is required for the heated pool which is open from 6 am, to 10 pm.

Councillor Grants

The latest round of Councillor Grants is now opening, and I have a total of £5000 that is available to parish councils and other local organisations. Please contact me in the first instance, and although there are some restrictions the purposes for which the grants can be used is quite wide.

Flytipping

SODC officers are very good at tracking down and prosecuting fly tippers, with an offender recently having to pay £1400 in fines and costs for dumping 4 bags of garden waste at the roadside. If you employ someone to take away waste, always make sure that they dispose of it properly.

Planning Appeals

I was pleased to see that a recent planning appeal in Whitchurch Hill was dismissed. This was on the edge of the village and was claimed to be previously developed land because there was an old stable on it.

Looking back over the past month or so, I see that out of 15 appeals all but 3 were dismissed. The Planning inspectorate is very much against new houses built in the countryside. The listing of planning appeals is on the SODC website

<https://data.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=AppealList&PAGE=2&TYPE=Decided&APPTYPE=ALL>

and there is all sorts of other information about planning in that part of the SODC website.

Peter Dragonetti

**REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS JULY 2023
FROM CLLR KEVIN BULMER**

GENERAL OCC REPORT

LTN IMPACT REPORT LEADS TO GROWING CALLS FOR RESIGNATIONS

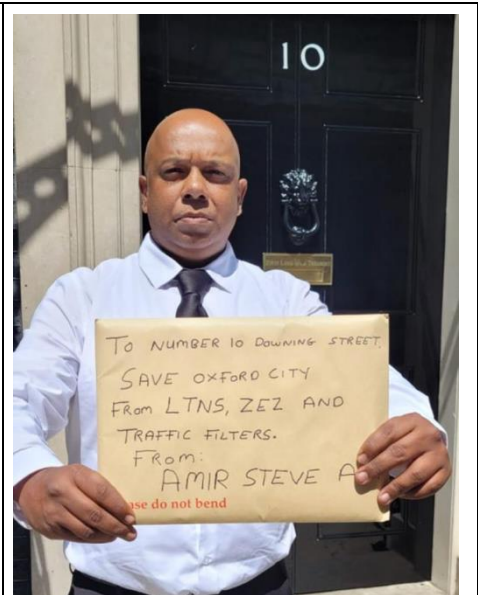
Leading OCC Cabinet members have faced calls to resign after a council report revealed modelling which showed Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) lead to ambulances experiencing delays when responding to “life threatening” calls. The council report analysed the impact of LTNs in East Oxford and Cowley on South Central Ambulance Service’s response times and found the traffic measures cause delays of between 35 to 45 seconds to response times for life threatening, emergency, and urgent calls in East Oxford. County councillor and leader of the Conservative group at the county council, Eddie Reeves, has since called for Andrew Gant, cabinet member for highways management and Duncan Enright, Cabinet member for travel, to resign for not releasing the information in an “open and transparent manner”.

THREE ROADS IN OXFORD TO BE MANAGED BY ANPR IN PLACE OF BOLLARDS

OCC has approved proposals to install automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras at three low traffic neighbourhood (LTN) closure points in Cowley, Oxford. The decision was made on Thursday 22 June by the Cabinet member for highways management at a delegated Cabinet member decision meeting. Motor vehicles without exemptions who drive through these points will be subject to a penalty charge notice.

PETITION DELIVERED TO DOWNING ST CALLING FOR NO CONFIDENCE VOTE IN OCC

Community champion Amir Steve Ali delivered a petition to Downing Street which calls for a no confidence vote in OCC due to its role in pushing ahead with Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs), the Zero Emissions Zone (ZEZ) and traffic filters (the four-sector plan). The petition on Change.org had been signed by more than 3,600 people on June 19 and it claims that the council’s traffic measures have caused more pollution and have led to emergency vehicles becoming stuck behind gridlocked traffic. The petition describes the council’s traffic measures as a “big threat to members of public freedom and businesses”. An Oxfordshire County Council spokesman said: “We are aware of the petition on Change.org. This is something for central government review subject to it meeting parliamentary petitions criteria.”



DECARBONISING PENSION INVESTMENTS IN OXFORDSHIRE

Pension funds invested for local government workers at Oxfordshire councils and a large number of other local organisations have been re-shaped to align investment decisions with the administration’s aim of creating a “greener, healthier and fairer county”. At its meeting earlier in June, the Pension Fund Committee agreed to

reduce its allocation to the UK market and in particular to the FTSE100 companies that have links to major oil, gas and mining companies. The committee also chose to end investments in emerging markets reflecting concerns about social and governance issues – specifically within China and Saudi Arabia.

HOME UPGRADE GRANT LAUNCH

OCC was recently awarded £6.417m of funding from the government’s Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2). HUG2 follows on from the Sustainable Warmth funding that officially ended in March this year, and is a two-year scheme running across Oxfordshire (with the exception of Oxford City, which has its own scheme) until March 2025. HUG2 publicly launched in June and is aimed at low-income owner occupier or privately rented households living in off-gas homes rated EPC ‘D’ or below, to enable a range of energy efficiency improvements to be retrofitted free of charge e.g. cavity wall and loft insulation, heating upgrades and solar PV. More information about the funding and the eligibility criteria can be found on the OCC website.

OCC SEEKS GOVERNMENT PERMISSION TO ADOPT LANE RENTAL SCHEME

Utilities and other companies who close Oxfordshire’s roads could be encouraged to minimise congestion and disruption when they carry out their work or face financial penalties of up to £2,500 a day. OCC will ask the government to allow it to introduce a lane rental scheme (LRS) which allows organisations working on the county’s busiest roads at the busiest times to face extra charges. If approved, the LRS would encourage those working on the highway to prioritise off-peak hours and to complete the work as quickly as possible to reduce their costs. Surplus money raised by the council would be used to help manage and improve the highway network.

POTHOLE INNOVATION TRIAL

After a winter that saw the number of potholes reported in Oxfordshire double compared to the same period last year and heavy criticism from the public, a trial has taken place aimed at improving the repair process. On Monday and Tuesday, 26 - 27 June, OCC and its highways contractor Milestone Infrastructure used the road between Steventon and East Hanney as a test site to trial seven different methods of filling in potholes or repairing minor defects requiring ‘patching’. Some of these methods are already used in Oxfordshire – including the Milestone [dragon patcher](#) – while the others were new ones sourced by Milestone. The Hanney/Steventon Road was closed and a 1km stretch was divided into sections. Each section had a different type of pothole or patch repair carried out to get a direct comparison of the various methods. Last year, Milestone Infrastructure, a part of M Group Services, repaired 31,413 road defects. This was against a backdrop of perfect pothole-forming weather conditions – a prolonged freeze over winter followed by a protracted period of wet weather, which led to an unprecedented increase in the number of emergency pothole repairs. The trial will allow comparisons of the type of repair, equipment, material, and labour used, and the time taken. This would include an understanding of the potential results, longevity of repairs, waste generated, carbon impact, use of recycled content and productivity that may be achievable. The next stage will involve contractors returning for at least four more days of work and additional testing and analysis to enable a longer-term review of the methods.

MONEY-SAVING STREETLIGHTING PROJECT SET TO BE COMPLETED NEXT YEAR

All of Oxfordshire’s streetlights are scheduled to be converted to energy efficient LED units in the next 12 months, saving millions of pounds and thousands of tonnes of carbon. The programme commenced under the previous Conservative administration. A total of 86 per cent of lights have now been converted. When completed, the £38 million project is expected to lead to energy savings of millions of pounds over the next 20 years. The LED lights will reduce the amount of carbon dioxide being produced by 70 per cent. Before the conversion programme started, the county’s streetlights accounted for around 7,596 tonnes of CO2 every year – representing nearly 35 per cent of the council’s total emissions.

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