

Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council

MINUTES of the Parish Council meeting held in ‘The Old Stables’, Monday 13th February 2017, commencing at 8.00pm.

PRESENT

Chairman	Keith Brooks
Vice-Chairman	Jim Donahue
Councillors	Dave Bowen Denise Huxtable
Clerk	Felipa House

Public:

Mike Fellows, Antoinette Solera.

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr. Hart, Cllr. Hatcher, Cllr. Steward, Cllr. Bulmer & Cllr. Simister.

2. Declarations of interest

None.

3. Public forum Opportunity for members of the public to address the Council. With the permission of the Chairman, the public may also speak about specific items of business as they arise.

Antoinette Solera & Mike Fellows represented Action for Pangbourne Toilets. They explained that the group is now a registered charity & in the process of applying for a bank account. They have received pledges of approximately £4,000 from local residents as well as a grant from Pangbourne Parish Council of £3,000. The Council was provided with costings for current & future refurbishment & maintenance. It is hoped that the entire toilet block will eventually reopen but initially only the disabled toilet will be available. West Berkshire Council have begun a refurbishment programme which will mean that the toilets are in a satisfactory state when APT sign the lease. There should therefore be no major costs initially.

4. Agree minutes of Parish Council meeting 9th January 2017

These were approved as a true record.

5. District councillor’s report

Cllr. Simister was not present.

6. County councillor’s report

Cllr. Bulmer was not present but had circulated his report before the meeting. This included details of OCC's draft intended proposal on how & why a single unitary authority for Oxfordshire could work (see www.oneoxfordshire.org), a potential 5% council tax rise in 2017/18 & 2018/19 to fund adult social care temporary funding & a potential new daytime support system that would enable older people & people with disabilities to live independently in their community. The Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group has also now launched the first phase of its consultation on proposed changes to health services in Oxfordshire.

7. Planning

P17/S0021/FUL, Walled Garden Retreat, High Street. The Council felt that the plans for the areas overlooking the property's neighbours were very similar to those submitted previously & therefore unanimously voted to submit 'No strong views'.

8. Finance Approve payments/note receipts

Monthly salary for the Clerk

Expenses for the Clerk for greetings card (£3.50)

Payment to MOWS for plants (£136.78)

Invoice from Nova Press for January edition of 'The Bulletin' (£310)

Payment to Cllr. Brooks for printer cartridge (£8.94)

Invoice from SODC for dog-bin emptying (£50.23)

Invoice from National Allotment Society for annual membership fee (£66)

Invoice from West Berkshire Council for 143 bus subsidy (£4,125).

The Clerk had circulated the latest risk assessment before the meeting. The Council requested that the Clerk arrange an inspection of the children's playground. Cllr. Huxtable volunteered to meet the inspector & take on the monthly inspection of the playground. The risk assessment was approved by the Council.

The Clerk had also circulated the updated asset register & amended financial regulations before the meeting. The Council were satisfied with these & they were therefore approved.

The Clerk had also prepared new standing orders in draft form & circulated them for comment. A section dealing with working groups needs to be inserted. A separate meeting to discuss the standing orders was requested. The Clerk will arrange this. A separate code of conduct policy is also needed, which the Clerk will prepare.

The Council agreed that the Clerk should purchase a gift to the value of £25 for Cllr. Hart to celebrate the birth of her daughter.

9. Village green

Maureen Stovell sent her apologies as she had not yet been able to obtain quotes for the proposed skate park/basketball net. Cllr. Bowen had received one quote, which was approximately £5,000 for a half-pipe & £3,500 for a basketball hoop with a 10m x 5m pad/apron in front of the basket. This would rise considerably once installation costs were added. The Clerk will ask Maureen whether she could attend March's meeting with quotes; Cllr. Bowen volunteered to help obtain quotes with her.

Cllr. Donahue requested more help with the new pavilion project. He will ask Cllr. Hart whether this is something she could do. Cllr. Brooks also volunteered to start investigating funding sources. The Council must work & liaise with the VGWG so that all sports users of the village green are represented.

10. TAPAG (Traffic and Parking Action Group)

Cllr. Brooks had met the local PCSO, Mark Bell, who stated that he would be in favour of yellow lines being painted along the High Street. These could include some sort of parking restrictions at various times of the day, e.g. no parking between 1-2pm. People would therefore still be able to park but not all day. This would be a lengthy & costly process but possibly worth looking in to in order to resolve the traffic congestion. The Council felt that this should probably form part of the wider village plan so that a cohesive approach is taken regarding parking & traffic in the village. More support for TAPAG in general is needed.

Volunteers are needed for the community speed watch programme. Cllrs. Brooks & Huxtable offered their time. Volunteers must work at least in pairs. An awareness raising day is perhaps needed for this.

Dog mess seems to be increasing in the village. Mark Bell had been given a video of a dog-fouling incident & would be speaking to the owner concerned. He gave Cllr Brooks some examples of dog-fouling signs that could be installed. The Council agreed on a sign they felt would be suitable & asked the Clerk to purchase 10 of them.

Cllrs. Brooks & Bowen, together with Peter Dragonetti of Goring Heath Parish Council, had met Mike Ward from Goring. He has just taken on the 133 bus service to/from Goring as a community infrastructure company ('Going Forward Buses'). Mr. Ward believes that he can offer Whitchurch/Hill a service equivalent to that currently provided by the 143. He needs to buy a second minibus, find storage for it & recruit extra drivers. The Council felt that the bus could be safely parked outside the village hall in Whitchurch & perhaps Goring Heath as well. Drivers would be paid the minimum wage (or preferably be volunteers) & need only to have a licence allowing them to drive a minibus. The Council will work with Goring Heath PC & Mr Ward to try to get this new service up & running & Cllr. Bowen will draft an article for the website asking for help. The Council decided that a deadline of July 2017 was a reasonable timeframe to aim for in terms of an alternative service being available & for subsidising the existing service. The Council therefore agreed to fund the current 143 service via Thames Travel until the end of July, using s.137 money. The Clerk was not prepared to spend any more money using this allowance.

11. Village hall refurbishment project

Cllr. Steward had obtained 4 quotes for building surveys for the village hall. The Clerk was asked to contact the company that had given the cheapest quote. Cllr. Brooks will meet the surveyor at the village hall when needed.

12. Village environment/maintenance

The Clerk had amended the village maintenance contract with input from councillors & had circulated it before the meeting for comment. Grass cutting frequencies were approved but the VGWG checklist must also be included. Cllr. Donahue will email this to the Clerk. The Clerk will contact 4 local providers once the contract has been finalised, asking that the quotes be fully itemised so that additional costs are known in advance.

The Clerk has received the final copy of the contract for the Polish church area & is awaiting payment instructions. Maintenance of this area should be included within the general village maintenance contract. The Council will ask MOWS whether this could perhaps be an area that they could help with.

13. Village /Neighbourhood Plans

There was no update regarding the village plan from Cllr. Hatcher as she was absent.

Cllr Donahue stated that progress had been made regarding what should be in the neighbourhood plan. The working group needs to liaise with SODC about the potential costs of the plan, although a grant of £5,000 is available immediately from them. The assumption is that the village might need to accommodate a 5% increase in housing stock over the next 10-15 years. There are, however, many limitations & constraints to this due to the area's environmental characteristics, traffic, school, current housing etc. If required, the ideal would be several areas in the village with a few houses each. Some debate ensued as to whether the plan would actually offer any protection against compulsory housing, the outcome being that the group would continue to research all aspects but spend no money on it yet.

14. Action for Pangbourne Toilets

Following the group’s earlier presentation the Council voted unanimously to donate £750 towards the costs. This may not be paid until the next financial year if the bank account is not active in time. There is potential for this to be an annual donation. Antoinette will send the Clerk a summary of progress to date for the website.

15. Village sign

The Clerk will discuss the requirements again with the local artist & ask her to liaise with Cllr. Donahue. He may also contact a local graphic designer.

16. Other matters for Chairman & PC to consider Items that arise that are not on this agenda but need discussion & to be proposed for a future agenda

Cllr. Brooks mentioned that the Great British spring clean is taking place locally between 3rd & 5th March. He will ask for volunteers to help on 4th March in the village.

The Council congratulated Cllr. Hart on the birth of her daughter.

17. Date of next meeting

Monday 13th March 2017 at 8pm.

Meeting closed at 10.15pm.

Signed.....
Chairman

Date.....