



**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Virtually at 20:00 Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

**Members Present**

Chairman Jim Donahue

Members Hanna Ferguson  
Jean-Marc Grosfort  
Katherine Higley  
Diana Smith

**Officers Present:**

Clerk Jane M. Yamamoto

**Public and Press:** Alistair Aitchison, Peter Dragonetti, Alex Hilton, Carrie Leadbeater-Hart, 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  
Cllr Steward informed the Council that he would not participate in any TAPAG discussions.
- 3 Co-option of New Councillor 20:05  
Cllr Donahue nominated Carrie Leadbeater-Hart to become a Councillor. Cllr Grosfort seconded the nomination. Carrie Leadbeater-Hart was voted in as a Councillor.
- 4 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.
- 4.1 Toll Bridge – Alex Hilton questioned if the bridge company was complying with government guidelines wearing PPE but exchanging cash. Cllr Higley said that they were not breaking any statutory regulations. There are no rules prohibiting the exchange of cash.
- 5 Chairman's Announcements 20:10

There have been a number of issues for use of the Village Green since the warm sunny weather we have had, combined with the coronavirus lockdown:

- Security of Village Green – concerns about travellers in Goring
  - Agenda item later to look at increasing security – Cllr Steward has been looking into options to make access more secure in the future.
- Continued issue of scattered glass at the goal mouth for which Cllr Donahue has been liaising with the police

- TVP are patrolling and have put up Police Operations signs
- They have recommended that we consider at least temporary use of CCTV cameras.
- This will be discussed this after the agenda item later under Village Green Security Item
- Cllr Smith has formed a group with members of the football and Cricket Club to look at:
  - Issues with rubbish left by groups visiting the green
    - Some of these may be football players, others are young men visiting for drinking. Cigarette butts and NO2 cannisters found.
  - Issue of large groups of boys playing football in excess of the maximum 6
  - Owners of the paddock are also pushing for a change to the football pitch to reduce balls damaging the fence and going into the paddock
  - Boundary fence between the VG and paddock should be replaced in the future for aesthetic and security reasons
- High Street Improvements
  - Allan Scriven has volunteered to paint Phone Box. It turns out that he did this 6 years ago.
  - Neil Plumridge has removed the storage box next to the Phone box that has been an eyesore for many years.
- The Green Team volunteer group lead by Francis Dixon and her husband Martin have started to better maintain the Manor Road verge. Logs have been placed along the verge to prevent cars from damaging the verge and roots of Yew trees.
- A resident raised the following issues:
  - The trees in Manor Road from the entrance up to the playground are now hanging over the road quite low and are being broken off by taller vehicles. Some of them need some trimming. This will be covered under agenda item today by Cllr Higley.
  - The pavement outside the back gates of Hopton needs repairing now the contractor's vehicles have stopped using the gates.
    - I will notify resident who has promised to make good, but this may also be addressed as part of pavements work we are getting estimates for.

Another resident requested that we raise a request for re-surfacing Hardwick Road at the narrows to OCC as it is badly damaged in several places. Cllr Donahue raised this to Fix My Street.

6 To approve minutes of the meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> and the Annual Parish Meeting 28<sup>th</sup> May 2020

**Resolution:** The Councillors approved the two sets of minutes.

7 Planning Applications

21:15

7.1 P20/S1721/HH  
Walliscote Farm, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EP

Single storey extension with rooflight to link the Farmhouse with the Fowl House. In addition, a small infill extension at the front of the Farmhouse and alterations to glazing size and position to the Fowl House

**Resolution:** The Council voted to submit: NO OBJECTIONS.

7.2

P20/S1766/HH

5 Swanston Field, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HP

Proposed roof dormer and single storey side extensions following demolition of existing outbuilding.

**Resolution:** The Council voted to submit: NO OBJECTIONS.

7.3

P20/S0706/FUL

Bozedown Farm, Hardwick Road, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7QY

Change of use of land adjacent to the dwellinghouse at Bozedown Farm to residential garden and constructions of a garden room for a purpose ancillary to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse.

Planning Decision: GRANTED

Cllr Higley was approached over the weekend by a parishioner notifying her that planning consent had been broken. It appeared that more of the chalk down was dug up than was permitted under the submitted plan. Cllr Higley informed the planning officer and any enforcement action would be taken by SODC.

8 To receive reports from the representatives of Oxfordshire County Council and South Oxfordshire District Council. 21:20

8.1 SODC District Councillor Report. See Attachment 1

8.2 OCC County Councillor Report

9 Finance: 21:30

9.1 **Resolution:** The following payments were approved:

Payment	Amount
Clerk salary (June 2020)	BACS
Phoenix Landscaping (removal of post box)	£200
Jim Donahue (Zoom 2 x months)	£28.78

10 Village Green Security – Cllr Steward 21:00

Cllr Steward reported on his investigation into making the Village Green access more secure to reduce the risk of travellers gaining access, as has happening in neighbouring villages recently. He described the two entrances to the VG. He said that the metal gates at either end of the Village Green could be removed easily. He recommended that access to the Village Green via the car park entrance be removed and replaced with sold fence/ hedges except for a kissing gate for pedestrian access. Vehicular access to the Village Green would be limited to the north end via Hardwick Road. Access would be via the existing gate at the top of Muddy lane, plus an additional wooden gate erected across from the allotments entrance for vehicular access to the Village Green. There would be an additional pedestrian access gate next to the vehicular access gate. Cllr Donahue asked if bollards could also be erected behind the existing Village green access gate, which has been used at the Pangbourne Meadow after travellers broke through the gate there. Cllr Steward said that bollards could be erected but felt that the rural look and access using kissing gates onto the green would still allow buggies and pedestrians easy access while deterring vehicles. The kissing gates could not be removed.

Cllr Higley recommended that the WDAS be consulted as they require regular access to their gates. Cllr Donahue said the Village Green WG should also be consulted.

Cllr Steward also proposed the use of CCTV dummy or real cameras with appropriate signage to address the recent activities on the Village Green. This could be done temporarily to deter people from outside the village littering, damaging and committing criminal acts like placing the glass and nails upon the green. He proposed to have these cameras on inaccessible areas of the green. For example, on the roof of the Cricket Pavilion. Cllr Higley (Data Protection Officer for the PC) advised that the Parish Council then must undertake Data Protection issues attached to this and abide by these rules.

Alistair Aitchison suggested staged deterrents. He informed the Council that there appeared to be less litter after police surveillance notices were put up. Carrie Leadbeater-Hart asked if the WOT website had placed up news that the police were investigating. Richard Wingfield confirmed that he would put a report on the website. Cllr Steward read out a villager's email to recommend a sign at both entrances to the Village Green as well as a sign by the fence.

**Resolution:** The Parish Council agreed to investigate the feasibility of using CCTV on the Village Green on a temporary basis to address recent issues with use of the Village green. They also agreed to post signs states the rules of use of the Village Green, such as not littering (once bins are in place).

**PC 150-Action:** Cllrs Steward and Fergusson to look into the feasibility of CCTV on the Village on a temporary basis to address the issue of broken glass being found at the west goal area.

**PC 151 -Action:** Cllrs Steward and Ferguson to review the feasibility of a kissing gate on the car park and two gates from the Hardwick Road entrance and to obtain 3 quotes.

**PC 152 – Action:** Cllrs Steward and Ferguson to propose wording for signs on the Village Green stating allowed behaviour (e.g. please dispose of litter).

#### 11 Yew Trees on Manor Road

Cllr Higley advised that simply chopping bits off the trees would not work. A management plan for the whole area should be considered with input from TAPAG, the Green Team and WOTHabs. She had spoken to one tree surgeon, will speak to another tomorrow and find a third one.

The first expert advised her that the Sycamores on the left-hand side would require trimming for statutory clearance for highway purposes. They would also require regular trimming as they grow quickly. On first inspection, the Yew trees were estimated at 300-400 years old. They did not require trimming; only perhaps to the bottom crown to lift the Yews. Two Dutch Elms that were dead required removal. It was recommended that the Council stick to placing logs on the verge. If posts were put into the ground, it would risk damaging the roots of Yew trees. To protect the Yews,

the Council should :1) prevent parking on the verge because the weight on soil would compact the earth 2) promote the current vegetation as it supported a wide ecology and held moisture in the soil. Clearing that area may damage roots and kill the trees. The proposal of an English meadow would not work as it would be the wrong environment. Cllr Higley will consult a bird expert and obtain 3 quotes. After, she will consult with TAPAG, the Green Team and WOTHabs concerning a management plan. The CAA would undoubtedly include the conservation of Yew trees as part of the history of the village.

12 Village Green Fence 20:20

Cllr Smith said that Alistair Aitchison provided a good summary that was emailed to all. Cllr Smith had met with the Football and Cricket Clubs one evening and with the Allens on a separate evening.

The group proposed the purchase of a ball-stop-net to minimise footballs going over the fence. It was 4.5m tall and 15m long that would be placed next to the fence but would still allow access to the stile should a ball go over it.

An additional proposal was to purchase sockets to go into the ground so that one of the goals could be placed into the North side on a temporary basis when required to enable replanting of grass in front of other goals.

It was decided that North-South goal posts could not be a permanent solution as the Cricket Club had concerns that the green may be damaged permanently from wear. Also, the Football Club said that this orientation for the pitch would mean that play would be on an incline.

The last proposal was to purchase a rubbish bin. Alistair said that he and the Football Club would take full responsibility for emptying this bin on a regular basis and promised to recycle those items that could be recycled in his own domestic waste.

Cllr Smith informed that the maximum cost to the Parish Council for the above items would be approximately £815. Alistair said he may be able to obtain 50% of this for the equipment from an FA grant.

The Clerk reminded all that it was minuted that the group would consult with the land owners prior to any decisions made. She also said that the water issue had been kept as a separate matter. Alex Hilton informed all that a resolution was needed quickly as Football practice had re-started. Alistair Aitchison said that it was not up to the Allens what the PC felt was the best for the Football and Cricket Clubs or the VG.

Cllr Smith said that she met with the Allens, who made it clear that they had tolerated balls coming over their fence for many years and they had reached their end of their tether. They were prepared to erect a high fence.

The councillors also discussed the proposal from a resident to only allow football playing by booking ahead of time and accessing mobile nets stored securely at another location. Alistair informed the Council that the proposal for mobile goal posts was not viable as it was a health and safety issue. The goals were heavy and highly dangerous to move. They posed a tripping hazard especially for boys trying to move it who could be seriously injured. Cllr Steward added that this could ruin the Cricket pitch with the wear and tear upon the green. Cllr Ferguson stated that a mobile net solution ruined the ability for the village youth to play spontaneously.

Alistair also recommended that the PC not attempt to police large gatherings on the VG, but to inform the police.

**Resolution:** The Council voted to purchase the ball catch net, bin and sockets at a maximum amount of £441.59 for the ball-stop-net, £120 for sockets and £238.74 for a rubbish bin.

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|----|---|-------|
| 13 | Standing Order – protocols for virtual meetings and time scale for draft minutes to be published.   | 21:30 |
|    | <b>Resolution:</b> The Council approved the update to the Standing Order that included changes to allow draft minutes to be published between meetings. |       |
| 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 Meeting on 9 July 2020 at 20:00.   | 21:50 |
|    | <b>Resolution:</b> This was confirmed.  |       |
| 16 | Meeting Close   | 22:10 |

Attachment 1

## **Report to Whitchurch Parish Council June 2020**

### **Coronavirus response**

The newly established Community Hub at SODC has been extremely active in supporting vulnerable residents over the past couple of months. Activity levels have now started to reduce, and were much lower over the past couple of weeks .

As you can appreciate, these tasks are new to many of the staff at SODC, and some of the technical systems have had to be redeveloped to cope (e.g. the business rates system is set up to take money in from local businesses, not to send funds the other way!). All of these new tasks also had to be absorbed at the same time as Council staff were being moved to home-working, having to deal with their own personal situations (home-schooling, self-isolating etc.) and maintaining existing services such as waste collection. Needless to say, we are certainly very proud of the way SODC staff have stepped up to the challenge and have responded to the new demands being placed on them.

### **Planning committees**

We have had our first two virtual planning committee meetings. Members of the public were able to watch online via a link on the SODC website, and a recording is available at <https://youtu.be/LMa7H8Lyr7c> if you are curious to see how it went! For future meetings, anyone wishing to take part will need to submit a written statement by email in advance, which will be shared with all the planning committee members. We are aiming to introduce full online public participation in due course, as soon as our IT security issues around public speaking are resolved.

### **Local Plan**

Proposed modifications to the emerging Local Plan 2034 are being drafted for submission to the Inspector but it will be up to the Inspector to accept or reject these. It has now been confirmed that the Examination in Public (EIP) will be held virtually during July and August. Some local groups have written to express concerns that this will restrict public participation. Those who made representations on the plan when it was being submitted in early 2019 are eligible to actually participate but other members of the public will be able to watch proceedings online. The organisation of the EIP is not within the control of SODC.

I am making representations on issues about reuse of rural buildings, replacement dwellings and the AONB. I am also making representation about developments in the Oxford Green belt and the AONB. There now seem to be proposals to take away all planning from Local Government and elected representatives.

### **SODC Finances**

The closure of the Leisure Centres and Cornerstone Arts Centre is having a serious financial impact, and without an end in sight I do not have information as to just what this will amount to in total.

### **Adapting our roads to accommodate safe cycling and walking**

Across the nation authorities are preparing for the easing of the lockdown restrictions and it has become patently clear that our narrow pavements and car-oriented roads are simply unsafe for an increase in bicycle traffic and social distancing. County Councillors have been collating proposals from across their wards to submit for consideration, since OCC is the Highways Authority. Much of the focus

so far has been on the more urban areas, including Oxford City, but we would like to see this vision extended to between our villages and between our villages and towns.

Once public transport is being used again, a key priority must be to integrate it with cycling, such as providing a safe cycling route to Cholsey station from Wallingford (and hence Crowmarsh), plenty of safe cycle storage and buses which can carry bikes for onward use. With all the new houses being built in our area, suggesting that commuters drive to Cholsey or Didcot must be the last option. You can read the Statutory guidance, 'Traffic Management Act 2004: network management in response to COVID-19' here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reallocating-road-space-in-response-to-covid-19-statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities/traffic-management-act-2004-network-management-in-response-to-covid-19>

We have also recently discovered a website called [www.widenmypath.com](http://www.widenmypath.com) where you can submit a suggestion for improvements to be made to an existing pavement or cycle path. Apparently it is monitored by OCC, so worth using!

### **Support for Local Businesses**

The South and Vale Business Support Service has received a huge increase in visits to its website, particularly since it is responsible for administering the business support schemes announced by the Government. From 3<sup>rd</sup> June they will be processing applications for the new Discretionary grants fund, aiming to support small businesses which were not eligible for the earlier rounds of funding. However, they have warned that the funds available total only 5% of the amount available under previous programmes, so they will not be able to respond positively to all applications. Further information is available at <https://www.svbs.co.uk>

It is also worth noting that the SVBS website has an online database listing all businesses which are open and trading in the area, so it is worth checking this to add your own business or to check who is currently open for business locally.

### **Car Parking Charges have been re-introduced**

With the gradual re-opening of shops and other facilities, car-parking charges were reintroduced from 8<sup>th</sup> June in SODC-owned car parks. This will go some way to restore some of the Council's lost income, and will also free up spaces for shoppers, who are still discouraged from using public transport. NHS staff and care workers who display a national COVID-19 pass can continue to park for free.

### **Civil Parking Enforcement**

This is progressing, and we at SODC are currently still waiting for the County Council to complete their work. The Covid situation and its consequences may have caused delay in this work by the County.