



MINUTES OF MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

At the Village Hall at 20:00 Thursday, November 9, 2023

Members Present

Chair	Jim Donahue
Vice-Chair	Diana Smith
Members	Nick Brazil Katherine Higley Debbie Leach Paul O'Grady Frances Parkes

Officers Present:

Clerk, RFO	Jane Yamamoto
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Public and Press: 1 resident

The meeting started at 20:00.

- 1 **Apologies for absence & Mission Statement** 20:00
There were no 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
- 4 **Chairman's Announcements** 20:10
I attended a meeting at Oxford County Hall 26th October - OALC, Oxfordshire County Council and the District and City Councils are working together to develop a Charter to support our partnership working with Town and Parish Councils.
 - A Charter is a commitment of principles to support successful partnership between all areas of local government
 - We had working sessions with other parish council representatives and discussed things such as having OCC being more responsive and accountable, explaining actions and reasons behind fix my street actions for example.
 - Expect a document for us to review and consider for approach in January timeframe.

Residents Issues:

- Leaky Taps on the Village Green
 - James Norman replaced the tap in the middle of the Village Green so the leaking has stopped.

- The tap at the top end of the field needs to be fixed by Thames Water. We had thought that this was being handled by the CC, but now hear that they want us to handle the relationship with Thames Water. The bill is currently in the Parish Council's name even though the CC are responsible for paying the bill.
- After consulting with the cricket club, we have agreed that the PC will now take the lead in resolving this.

Remembrance Sunday – Cllr Leach has identified volunteers to stop traffic on the Whitchurch-on-Thames side during the ceremony.

High Street Residents Parking and Pedestrian Safety Plan Consultation – This has obviously started. I have received a few comments from members of the public, but we need to wait until all feedback is received from OCC before making a formal response.

5 To approve minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council meeting of October 12, 2023.

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the minutes.

6 Planning Applications – to discuss and agree Council's response to the following: 20:15

6.1 P23/S2413/HH

Pavilion Cottage, Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ

First floor rear extensions and general alterations (Bat survey report received 20 October 2023).

Resolution: The Parish Council voted to submit a comment that we would support this application as long as the Ecology Team supports it.

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

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

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

8 **Finance:** 20:25

8.1 To approve the payment schedule for November:

Payment	Sub-total	VAT	Total
Staff expenditure			£506.80
Resident expenses (timber for VG car park repair)	£31.56		£31.56 BACS
Scofell (October)	£739.98	£148.00	£887.98
Tirio (First Aid Training)	£1,430		£1,430.00 BACS
Sign Wizard (Speed watch)	£369.61	£73.92	£443.53 BACS
Herald Graphics (Autumn)	£519.00		£519.00
Resident (MOWS)			£37.93
British Legion	£19.98	£4.00	£23.98 DD
Emorsgate (seeds for Manor Road)	£24.00		£24.00 DD
SODC (Dog bins Q1/Q2)	£793.11	£158.62	£951.73

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the payments.

8.2 Receipts:

Receipts	Amount

8.3 Bank Reconciliations (October 2023) (Attachment 3, 4,5)

8.4 Internal Control Policy for Q1/23 (Attachment 6)

8.5 Internal Control Policy for Q2/23 (Attachment 7)

9.0 Motion to approve to place an advert on the village website seeking a donation of either a wooden barrel or a water butt for the Manor Road Conservation area. Having a barrel or water butt to collect rain water will reduce the need for the Guardian of the Conservation Area having to carry large quantities of water during the summer months to water the yew trees as it is both a physical demanding and time consuming task– Cllr Higley seconded by Cllr Smith 20:30

9.1 Two Councillors may have 2 water butts to donate, but the Motion was passed just in case. Two councillors indicated that they may have water butts to donate.

Resolution: The Parish Council voted to approve the motion.

10.0 Motion to agree that Cllr Higley orders a Brown Bin from SODC for the Manor Road Conservation Area for a period of one year. Cllr Higley seconded by Cllr Smith 20:40
Background

10.1 Parish Councils are not allowed brown bins. There is a huge amount of vegetation to be cleared from the Conservation Site and whilst several residents have been generous in helping dispose of the vegetation cleared to date, this is not a long-term solution. Cllr Higley therefore proposes to order a brown bin in her name which she will keep on her property and move to the Conservation Area to fill and then remove back to my property. Cllrs Smith and Higley agree that this should be reviewed on an annual basis.

10.2 **Resolution:** The Parish Council voted to approve the Motion.

11.0 Motion to approve the Village Green Car Park quote to repair with grasscrete (Attachment 8) – Cllr Parkes seconded by Cllr Donahue

11.1 The choice was between one quote for grasscrete which broadly matches what was there already and most desirable from an environmental point of view versus a quote for concrete. The quote for grasscrete had gone up slightly.

Resolution: The Parish Council voted to approve the quote to repair the Village Green Car Park with grasscrete.

12.0 Discussion on the representation at the OCC Cabinet Meeting on Thursday, December 14, 2023 for the Whitchurch-on-Thames Parking Plan – Cllr Smith 20:45

12.1 A Councillor updated that the OCC Cabinet meeting date had changed to January 25, 2024. OCC had made 2 changes to the plan: the top 2 parking areas were changed to residents only and the bottom one was a mix of residents and public. Also, another change that OCC made was the days of the parking restrictions to Monday to Saturday to avoid congestion. There will be a 2 week gap where OCC will review the comments submitted by the public. There will be time for tweaking the plan then. There may be an

extra parking space at the top of the High Street. This would be for either a 4th parking space or a blue badge space. The Council felt that a 4th parking space would be ideal. Blue badge holders were allowed to park on double yellow lines in any case. All agreed that any parking plan would not be perfect.

- 12.2 Cllr Smith will go back to OCC to ask for 4 spaces at the top and to change back to the parking restrictions to Monday to Friday. The Council felt that a more gentle approach to the restrictions would be best and if Saturday congestion continued, the Council could return to have this changed. Cllr Smith will also raise the issue of a pedestrian crossing on the High Street. It was noted that unless this area was more clear of cars, there would be no chance to place this on the High Street. She will also place into the response the concern for pedestrian and driver safety.
- 13 Tea Hut Demolition (Attachment 9) – Cllr Parkes 21:00
- 13.1 Cllr Parkes will bring a Motion to the Council at the next meeting for the approval of the electrical work to make the Tea Hut safe prior to demolition and also for the actual demolition work.
- 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, December 14, 2023 at 20:00. 21:10
- 16 Confidential discussion for thank you notes from the Parish Council
The Council agreed to send a thank you to Jill Bradon for the hedge cutting, cherry tree and yew tree watering during the summer months. Also, to thank Nicola Armstrong for ensuring the Festival of Light evening was a community event.
- 17 Meeting closed. 21:20

Attachment 1

Report to Whitchurch on Thames Parish Council November 2023

Online forum on supporting energy efficiency upgrades to homes

A reminder that SODC is hosting a **free online forum** to help support residents to reduce their energy use and costs. This will be held online **Tuesday 14 November at 6-7.15pm**. The speakers will talk about the support that is available and some inspiring examples of local projects to help residents. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions. Again, if anyone from the PC is interested in attending, please contact climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk

Thermal Imaging Camera available to loan

As the weather gets colder, SODC will be lending out our thermal imaging camera again to community groups and parishes. They can use the camera to identify spots in buildings where heat is escaping and where energy-saving measures could help make a place more comfortable and reduce fuel bills at the same time.

Extra Funding for the District

SODC has been making a sustained effort to ensure that the District applies for as much funding as possible from different sources to support the community, and I am pleased to say that we have been successful in getting £733,000 in SODC and £520,000 in the Vale from the Rural Prosperity Fund, and £285,000 in SODC and £156,000 in the Vale from Sports England to support the running costs of our swimming pools. The latter was not a bad proportion of a national fund of £20 million .

Grants will be made by the Council from the funding of the Rural Prosperity fund, details on the SODC web site. Unusually, the range of organisations that can apply is very wide.

Town and Parish Councils
Public sector organisations
Higher and further education institutions
Private sector companies
Registered charities
Constituted community based organisations
Social enterprises like CIC's
Arms-length bodies of government

Deadline 24 November

Recent motions passed by SODC Council

- At its meeting on 12th October, SODC Council unanimously passed two motions brought by members. The **first** was to ensure that all contractors awarded business by the Council sign up to paying the Real Living Wage to their employees. This will mean that the Council can apply to become a Real Living Wage certified employer (direct staff are already paid at least this amount) and will ensure that, where contractors are benefiting from index-linked increases in their fees, they will reward their own employees accordingly. (It was discovered at a Joint Scrutiny meeting recently that Saba, the firm which operates the SODC and Vale car parks, only pays the national minimum wage and is struggling to recruit operatives.)

The **second** motion regretted the Government's recent reductions in its climate targets and called on the Leader of the Council to write to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, requesting a

regulatory impact assessment of the outcome of their policy changes, and to seek an assurance and rationale for how they consider these policy changes to be compliant with their statutory obligations to meet current and future carbon budgets.

It also resolved that SODC's Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee (CEEAC) should consider the impact of the UK Government's u-turn on net zero on the council and district, and review the 2025 and 2030 net zero ambitions and the current 2022-2024 climate action plan in order to set appropriate (and suitably ambitious) targets for the next 4-year plan.

Affordable Housing Grants now made simpler

Both councils recently approved an improvement to the existing affordable housing policy to enable funds from Section 106 developer contributions to be used as a grant to build affordable homes that are energy efficient and cheaper for residents to live in and heat. The policy includes a revamped application process which includes clear evaluation guidelines and free expert consultation services for applicants who would like additional guidance.

This policy is part of the district councils' work to help meet the urgent need for genuinely affordable rental housing in the region; local developers, Community Land Trusts and self-builders can apply for a Section 106 affordable housing grant to build affordable homes that meet the councils' climate criteria.

Bad weather and waste collections

If bad weather affects waste collections this winter, here's what should happen

If bins are not emptied on their scheduled collection day, leave them out for two more days and they should then be emptied.

If, after three days, they have not been emptied, bring the bins back in and they will be emptied on the next usual day. If this happens, extra waste can be left out beside the bin in a suitable container.

Street Trading Panel

A panel of Councillors will be considering the licence application in respect of the Greyhound, as well as two other pub applications at 10 am on Monday December 4 at Abbey House Abingdon. These panel meetings are open to the public, unless there are matters that are deemed confidential.

Details from the Licensing Team at SODC

Peter Dragonetti

Attachment 2

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

GENERAL OCC REPORT

OCC IN STATE OF 'NO OVERALL CONTROL' (NOC)

As reported last month, the 'Fair Deal alliance' running OCC collapsed in acrimony at the end of September after Labour withdrew, and the LibDem/Green group is now attempting to run the council with a minority administration. The council make up is now:

LibDem/Green: 24

Conservative Independent Alliance: 21

Labour: 14

Independent: 3

The Labour group has submitted a motion for Full Council on 8th November proposing a cross-party, quasi-committee system. The Conservative Opposition is considering its response.

NEW CABINET

Details of the new Cabinet can be found here:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/about-your-council/oxfordshire-councillors/oxfordshires-cabinet>

COUNCIL BUDGET FOR 2024/25 UNDER DEVELOPMENT

The OCC Budget process for 2024/25 is now underway. Given the NOC status of the council, the development and approval process is likely to be especially challenging.

CONTROVERSIAL LOW TRAFFIC NEIGHBOURHOODS (LTNS) WILL REMAIN

The hugely controversial low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) in east Oxford are to remain, following a decision by OCC's Cabinet at a packed meeting on Tuesday, 17 October. This is despite the fact that the 18-month trial has been lambasted by residents and businesses. Cabinet also approved the use of automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras in place of existing physical barriers, which have been repeatedly vandalised.

HEAVY RAINFALL AND HIGH RIVER LEVELS IN OXFORDSHIRE

Consistent rainfall in recent weeks has led to higher than normal river levels on many watercourses in Oxfordshire with further wet and windy weather in the forecast linked to Storm Ciaran. Below is useful information for local people to monitor the situation in their part of the county – especially when the Environment Agency issues flood alerts or the more serious flood warnings. There are also links to the Met Office's weather warning bulletins.

- The Environment Agency's information relating to current flood alerts and flood warnings and the five-day flood risk for Oxfordshire can be found here: <https://check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk/location?q=Oxfordshire>. This page also captures flood alerts and warnings from areas immediately adjacent to the county.
- The Met Office issues weather warnings when severe weather is expected. These give an indication of problematic weather that may be on its way to Oxfordshire and could further influence river levels. Details here: <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/warnings-and-advice/uk-warnings>
- OCC has produced a 'flooding toolkit' which provides advice and support for residents and businesses. It can be found here: <https://www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com>

GOVERNMENT AWARDS £1.9 MILLION OF EXTRA BUS FUNDING FOR OXFORDSHIRE

Sunday single fares in December in the run-up to Christmas are set to be capped at £1 after Oxfordshire was awarded extra government funding to improve bus services. A countywide day bus ticket valid for all operators could also be created after Oxfordshire was promised an additional £1.9 million to improve bus services over the next two years. It comes on top of £12.7m from the government in August 2022 following the council's successful Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) application. The additional £1.9m of funding – known as BSIP+ – is for measures that will increase long-term patronage, help maintain service levels, ensure essential social and economic connectivity for local communities and promote innovation.

POLICE AND OCC REAFFIRM 20MPH SPEED LIMITS EFFECTIVELY 'VOLUNTARY'

In response to parish council criticisms about the lack of effectiveness of OCC's £8million 30mph to 20mph sign-changing exercise, the Oxford Mail has reported that a spokesperson for Thames Valley Police has said:

"We enforce speed limits based on evidence and threat and harm principles and officers will always deal with situations they encounter operationally. We also rely on the public to provide information and would encourage anyone with information about speeding or poor driving to please report it so that we can gather information about a particular area and take action where appropriate. We would ask people to report online on our website or by calling 101. While we share the council's enthusiasm for road safety and making improvements for all road users, it is also important that the introduction of 20mph speed limits is done in conjunction with Department for Transport guidelines."

OCC confirmed the voluntary nature of the 20mph in its reply:

"Although [OCC] is working alongside Thames Valley Police, who are responsible for legal enforcement of the speed limits, there is an emphasis on drivers adhering to the new limits through a change of mindset, rather than enforcement. It is hoped that as 20mph areas become more common, breaking the limit would become socially unacceptable for drivers."

FURTHER EXPANSION OF CLIMATE CHANGE TEAM & CLIMATE CHANGE SURVEY

OCC is currently in the process of recruiting a 'Climate Change Outreach Officer'. The position is to 'to develop and deliver our stakeholder engagement and outreach strategy to engage, inspire, motivate, and facilitate action on climate change, and promote resilience to a changing climate, across a wide range of audiences in Oxfordshire'. OCC is also advertising for a Climate Change Team Leader. Additionally, OCC is conducting a survey soliciting views on climate change. Details can be found here: <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/climate-change-2023>

RESIDENTS WARNED AGAINST COLD CALLERS OFFERING PROPERTY REPAIRS

Residents are being warned to be wary of cold callers offering to do property repairs after the recent storms. OCC's Trading Standards team is receiving an increased number of complaints about cold callers and leaflets for traders being put through the door, resulting in some reports of overcharging for work, charging for unnecessary work and completing work of poor quality.

Jody Kerman, Head of Trading Standards at Oxfordshire County Council says: *"Don't agree to offers of building work, home repairs or maintenance that come from a cold call. Don't be afraid to say no, don't be pressured and check with others if the work is required and what is a fair price to pay. If it's out of the blue, it's not for you! I encourage people to 'take five' – stop and take a moment and think, do I*

really need this work done? Obtain other quotes and seek advice, and recommendations for trades people from friends and relatives. I would also encourage getting three quotes from different traders before you agree to any work being done.”

CONTACT DETAILS

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