

Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council

MINUTES of the Parish Council meeting held in ‘The Old Stables’, Tuesday 10th October 2017, commencing at 8.00pm.

PRESENT

Chairman	Keith Brooks
Vice-Chairman	Jim Donahue
Councillors	Sarah Hanfrey Denise Huxtable
Clerk	Felipa House

Public:

Charles Cotgreave & Hilary Jensen.

1. Apologies for absence

Cllrs. Dave Bowen, Rachel Hatcher & Carrie Leadbeater-Hart, Cllr. Simister & Cllr. Bulmer.

2. Declarations of interest

None mentioned.

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.

Charles Cotgreave mentioned that at last month’s meeting he had thought there was a time limit between acceptance of the SODC Local Plan & submission of the Parish Council’s Neighbourhood Plan. He has since determined that the Neighbourhood Plan can be submitted at any time during the 15-year validity of the Local Plan.

4. Agree minutes of Parish Council meeting 12th September 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 had submitted his report before the meeting. This included information about a bid for traffic infrastructure funding to pump-prime 3 major development schemes within Oxfordshire (Didcot Garden Town, West Oxfordshire Garden Village & north Oxford), start-up funding for open access children’s services, a new system of delivering daytime support services & free electric blanket testing for any Oxfordshire residents.

7. Planning

Hilary Jensen wondered whether it would be possible to physically peg out the proposed location of the new pavilion & take a photo for the website. She asked whether the 9m boundary from the trees was a final decision. It seems that this is the simplest option, but the foundations could perhaps be changed to avoid this. Cllr. Brooks will write an article for the website, including the current plan, &

explain why the pavilion's location has potentially been changed. An open day could perhaps be held on the village green to display the plans & layout/location.

8. Finance Approve payments/note receipts

Monthly salary for the Clerk

Expenses for the Clerk for stamps (£6.72)

Invoice from the Environment Agency for annual frontage fee (£55.51)

Invoice from NSALG for annual allotment rental (£408.74)

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

Payment to St. Mary's PCC for hire of The Old Stables (£10).

The standing orders have been updated & are in draft form. They need to be reviewed & finalised. The Clerk will arrange an additional meeting within the next month.

9. Village green

The VGWG meeting was held last night, at which improved communication between the cricket club & the village maintenance contractor was discussed. The cricket club will provide a list of their fixtures before the season begins & Cllr. Brooks, who is now Chairman of the VGWG, will pass these on to the contractor. The fixtures list will determine when the 12 planned cuts for the year will occur. (This is of course subject to change dependent upon the weather). The schedule of cuts will then be published & emailed to all those concerned by Cllr. Brooks. The cricket club will fund an extra 2 cuts per year if necessary; the cost of any further cuts would then need to be discussed between the Parish Council & cricket club. The cricket club must also ensure that it gives a reasonable amount of notice to the contractor should an additional cut be needed. A schedule for grass-cutting in the churchyard would also be useful.

10. Village green working group/pavilion

All those at the VGWG were quite positive about the purchase of a marquee for village use. The football & cricket clubs didn't feel they had an actual need for it but would use it if it were available. Cllr. Hanfrey felt that if organisations wanted to use it they should put forward some money towards its initial purchase. The ongoing maintenance & storage of it could be an issue.

11. TAPAG (Traffic and Parking Action Group)

Cllr. Brooks had received an email from Rebecca Dunstan regarding defects at the Lower Narrows (drivers not recognising the physical limitations of this area & more drivers mounting the kerb etc.). A female resident had also spoken to Cllr. Brooks about the erosion of the verges outside 'Racquets' in the High Street. He will forward this information to Cllr. Hatcher. He has also reported the missing bollard, blocked drain & cracked pavement in the Lower Narrows on FixMyStreet.

12. Village hall refurbishment project

BP Castrol are currently not in a position to progress any plans they had regarding the village hall but will inform the Clerk if anything changes.

Someone is needed to lead the renovation project & look at the results from the survey carried out earlier this year. Cllr. Hanfrey would potentially be interested but wanted to know more about the bigger picture first. What will the village hall be used for long-term? Is its lifespan meant to be 5 years, 15, or 50, for example.

13. Village environment/maintenance

The Clerk had received a Freedom of Information request regarding the maintenance contractor's public liability insurance. Following this, which raised some important issues, it has been decided that the Council's processes will be changed & strengthened accordingly. All paperwork & documentation will be checked more thoroughly & before any work is carried out. Generally, it was felt that the maintenance contractor had done a good job this year & the Council therefore resolved to renew his contract. The Clerk will inform him accordingly. The contract will need to be amended to include the new schedule/s required.

Cllr. Brooks will look at the minor issues raised in the report about the playground & obtain a quote for the work.

The village sign company is now in discussion with OCC Highways regarding the installation of the sign, as they were concerned about its location & potential road safety & closure/access.

The Clerk will ask SODC whether the Council is permitted to replace the fencing on the former Polish church site. Cllr. Brooks will obtain quotes for replacement fencing & disposal of what is currently there.

14. Village /Neighbourhood Plans

Cllr. Brooks stated that he felt Cllr. Donahue's involvement in recent articles on the village website & in the 'Henley Standard' about the Neighbourhood Plan was overstepping the mark & could lead to misinterpretation & lack of consistency. He believed that Cllr. Donahue had not adhered to the Council's media policy & that any such article should have been agreed in advance by the Council. Charles Cotgreave mentioned that some residents had been shocked that the Neighbourhood Plan had been 'abandoned'. Cllr. Donahue felt that he had adhered to the Council's policies & that the village website & 'Henley Standard' content could not be controlled. Cllr. Hanfrey wanted to see how the processes could be improved in the future. It was resolved that in future the Council will agree all press releases in advance & include a contact name at the bottom. This will be discussed further at the offsite meeting about standing orders.

15. 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 stated that the cross for the top of the war memorial is currently being made at the local stonemason's & will be ready in time for Remembrance Sunday.

The beech trees near the school should be cut only to hedge height to aid regeneration, rather than being felled completely. This means that unfortunately the Council will not be able to accept James Norman's generous offer of help & a contractor will instead be needed, which will entail quite a large cost. A WoTHabs plan is also needed.

A village hall ebooking system has been recommended. This will be discussed at next month's meeting.

16. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 14th November 2017 at 8pm.

Meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Signed.....
Chairman

Date.....