



MINUTES OF MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL
At the Village Hall at 20:00 Thursday, April 13, 2023

Members Present

Chair	Jim Donahue
Vice-Chair	Diana Smith
Members	Katherine Higley Frances Parkes

Officers Present:

Clerk, RFO Jane Yamamoto

Public and Press: Cllr Dragonetti

The meeting started at 20:00.

1 **Apologies for absence & Mission Statement** 20:00

Cllrs Brazil and O'Grady sent their 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.

There were no members of the public that wanted to express an opinion.

4 **Chairman's Announcements** 20:05

Village Celebration of Coronation of King Charles III May 8th! I hope you are able to attend the community event to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III we are planning on the Village Green on Monday 8th May from 2 – 5pm. It will be a similar format to the successful event held for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee last year.

- The Roy Bailey Big Band will be playing and there will be community table of tea, cakes, biscuits and other donations.
- There is no charge and everyone is welcome, including visitors from out of town or residents from other villages. We just ask that people consider bringing donations of cakes or biscuits if possible.
- The Church will be organising Arts & Crafts activities for children.
- The school plans to sell Pimm's and beer.
- Please contact our Clerk Jane Yamamoto at parishclerk.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com if you have questions or would like to be involved.

Muddy Lane – You may have seen that improvements have been made to Muddy Lane over the Easter holiday. I hope that you will agree that it makes Muddy Lane a lot less muddy and easier to use for everyone, especially parents and children using it for going to school from Hardwick Road. This was contracted by the Parish Council and funded by a grant from Oxfordshire County Council. Thanks to the Green Team for recommending these improvements and managing the work, especially Muddy Lane Guardian Neil Huntington. The local contactor, Dan Hazel, used road scrapings to improve drainage and eliminate areas where puddles can form.

Separately, the Parish Council is applying to formally take over ownership of Muddy Lane as there is no clear owner of this strip of land in the Land Registry and the Parish Council want to ensure it stays accessible for the community.

Cllr Leadbeater-Hart has decided not to provide a nomination for the upcoming Parish Council elections, so has resigned, stating that she does not have sufficient time to give the Parish Council work the justice it deserves. We can advertise the vacancy after the new council is officially formed in May. I propose that we should send her a thank you letter for the work she has done for the village.

Other Residents Issues:

Greyhound impacted by Flash Flooding – The deluge of rain on Friday 31st March threatened to flood the Greyhound again. I have been discussing actions we can take to support this, including clearing the drains, which has been added to Fix My Street, and have requested Street Cleaners.

Cllr Smith reported on the first Speedwatch carried out this past week. The highest speed recorded was a vehicle going northbound at 46 miles per hour and 67 vehicles were recorded speeding. The WOT Speedwatch group will provide a full report. The equipment used was on permanent loan. They must book slots with the police each time before a speed survey was carried out and then provide the records to the police. Offenders might be fined by the police.

OCC's preparation for the High Street Parking Plan consultation is in progress. The OCC traffic regulation order had been given to their team and consultation will be sent soon to the village. OCC changed the use of the parking: the two smaller residents parking only bays will be located at the top of the High Street while the two bottom parking bays will be shared use. Despite a councillor requesting that this be changed as per the Parish Council's vote and TAPWG's recommendation, OCC would not change its decision. Once in place, all will be reviewed after a year. The Parking Plan was out of the Council's hands now.

Cllr Smith reported that they were still working on the legal agreement with the owner of the strip of land of the playground. The resident had not received their draft from their solicitor.
Action 191: The Green Team will be asked if they can help take away the organic material from the verges of Muddy Lane.

5 To approve minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council meeting of March 9, 2023.

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the minutes.

6 Planning Applications – to discuss and agree Council's response to the following: 20:10

6.1 P22/S4285/HH

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

The application is for detached room/outbuilding. (the size and scale of the proposed outbuilding has now been reduced, as shown on amended plans received 21st March 2023) (additional information for the forestry officer received 3 March 2023).

Resolution: The Council voted to object on the basis that the revised plan was a small reduction from the original plan and still could be used as a separate dwelling. The neighbours also had objections.

6.2 P23/S1017/HH

Swanston House, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7ER

New gable extension to front elevation, bringing front door to centre with landing widow above, replacing existing 1st floor dormer window. Small single storey side extensions. Small alteration/extension with balustrade above. Glazed roof over existing loggia renovated and enlarged to extend outdoor covered seating area.

Resolution: The Council voted to support this application.

6.3 P23/S1088/DIS

Aroona, Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ

Discharge of Condition 4 (surface water drainage works) on application ref P22/S3933/HH (Detached garage building).

Resolution: The Council voted to submit no comments as it never received the original application from SODC.

6.4 P23/S1070/FUL

The Walled Garden, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EP

Demolition of existing dwelling and rear outbuildings, replacement by a detached dwelling and detached double garage (Amended application following withdrawal of application P22/S3901/FUL).

Resolution: The Council voted to object based on the scale, bulk and massing, the damage to the Conservation Area, the harm to the setting of nearby listed buildings and the harm to public visual amenity and heritage townscape and the risk to village flood defences and increased flood risk.

7 To receive reports from the representatives of Oxfordshire County Council and South Oxfordshire District Council 20:45

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

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

8 **Finance:** 20:50

8.1 To approve the payment schedule for April:

Payment	Sub-total	VAT	Total
Staff expenditure			£506.80
OCC (Parking Restrictions)			£3,320.00 BACS
SODC Q4/Q1 22/23	£753.48	£150.70	£904.18
Resident (MOWS)	£		£67.50
Scofell	£739.98	£148.00	£887.98
Site Spider (web-site hosting annual)			£61.10

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the payments.

Receipts	Amount
SODC Precept (first half)	£13,540.00

8.3 Bank Reconciliation for March 2023

9 Motion to approve the purchase of two Woodland Mixtures of wildflowers and grasses for the Manor Road Conservation Area for £24 (including shipping) – Cllr Higley seconded by Cllr Smith 20:30
 These seeds include a good mix of woodland wildflowers and grasses that will bloom in Spring and early Summer. Newly planned woodland takes a few years for the tree canopies to close and for the light levels to drop. In time, as the shade increases (and the ground cover declines) up to

50% more woodland plants are expected to be able to thrive. At this point, we could choose to sow some more wildflower only seeds).

- 9.1 A councillor consulted WotHabs about what plants to place in the Manor Road Conservation Area. For example: bluebells, witches' broom, woodspurge, corncrackle orchids. They have taken out about 3000 sycamore plant seedlings and more than 2000 sycamore seedlings still remain. As the area has now been cleared, there is more light and sycamore seedlings are popping up. Once the yews have grown and provide more shade, the grasses can be removed and more wild flowers planted.

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the Motion.

- 10 Motion to approve an application to the Land Registry for the Parish Council to take 'Adverse Possession' of Muddy Lane, Whitchurch-on-Thames – Cllr Smith seconded by Cllr Higley 20:35

- 10.1 A councillor reported that the application should only cost £30. A resident will start the process. If it is granted, the Parish Council will own Muddy Lane. As the Parish Council have maintained it for at least 50-60 years, it was agreed it would be a good idea. Another councillor said that the land registry office is overwhelmed at the moment, so not to worry if the application was not dealt with immediately.

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the Motion.

- 11 Motion to put up unobtrusive signs on the Village Green ' CCTV is operating in this area' in the vicinity of the Pavilion in an attempt to discourage anti-social behaviour – Cllr Parkes seconded by Cllr Donahue. 20:40

- 11.1 A councillor advised that the sign would be a good will gesture and important to listen to the concerns of other residents and village groups.

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the Motion.

- 12 Parish Council Elections – Thursday, May 4, 2023 – Clerk 21:00

- 12.1 The Clerk updated that the nominations for the 6 Parish Councillors were uncontested. The Chair will officially announce this at the May 11, 2023 meeting. The Parish Council can also co-opt a Councillor at a future meeting.

- 13 Heads of Terms of Agreement with Cricket Club – Cllr Donahue 21:10

- 13.1 Cllrs Donahue and Parkes presented a summary of the key clauses of the Draft Heads of Terms document with the WCC. The objective of the document was to transfer the ownership of the buildings on the VG from the WCC to the WOTPC. This would allow the WOTPC to ensure it is insured, maintained and managed to ensure they are available for the community. Cllr Donahue stated that the key concerns that the WCC had that needed to be addressed in the document was:

- The WCC would continue to have access to the VG and accessing the pavilion in line with the existing PC/WCC agreement
- The PC did not charge the WCC an excessive amount to access the facilities to "price them out"

The Clerk had obtained a quote for the insurance of the Pavilion for £45.94. The WCC have promised to repair the broken windows this month. A Councillor raised concerns if it was a club as there seemed to be no members or subs and was concerned that there was not one person

that could sign a legal agreement. A councillor responded that the WCC were raising funds through a 'Pay and Play membership', have a structure and have just had their AGM. A Councillor raised the issue that they only wanted the transfer the building. Another councillor responded that the WCC would like the Heads of Terms agreed before the transfer of the buildings. A councillor has stated that some members of the WCC have been very helpful in clarifying utilities costs and other information.

Action-192: Councillors to provide comments and concerns on the draft document to Cllrs Donahue and Parkes before it is sent to the WCC for review. concerns to help with the draft.

- 14 Village Green Car Park – Cllr Parkes
- 14.1 Cllr Parkes reported that the current surface, called grasscrete, was now placed differently. It was now only installed with large squares. A company will try to find a small amount to repair it. The contractor who did the work originally has long retired and could not recommend another company. If they cannot find the small amount, then the Parish Council will have to decide how to progress this.
- 15 To review progress on any open actions from previous Parish Council meetings and agree any revision of actions on the action list.
- 16 To confirm the date and time of the next meeting is the Annual Parish Meeting is on Thursday, May 11 at 20:00 and for the Annual Assembly Meeting on Thursday, May 25, 2023 at 19:30. 21:20
- 17 Confidential discussion for thank you notes from the Parish Council. It was agreed to send Thank you notes to Sandra Parkinson, Sally Woolhouse and Carrie Leadbeater-Hart.
- 18 Meeting closed. 21:30

**Annual Report to Whitchurch On Thames Parish Council
Annual Parish Meeting, 13th April 2023**

Corporate Plan Delivery

The Council adopted its current Corporate Plan towards the end of 2020, so 2022-23 was the second full year of its implementation. We have continued to publish quarterly performance reports, which contain a vast amount of information, facts and figures about the activities and priorities of the Council. They also highlight where progress has not been as good as hoped. The reports are remarkably readable and provide much more in-depth information than can be provided in this annual report, so again we encourage everyone to take a look at <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/corporateplan>.

The Climate Action Plan quarterly reports are also available on the Council's website, as are a whole host of other qualitative and quantitative reports. A new Data Hub holds all of this information and can be access at any time at <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/datahub>.

The Community Hub – now a permanent fixture

The Community Hub was set up in the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic to provide support across the District, most particularly for vulnerable residents. Much of this work was funded by Government grants, while Council officers were redeployed to work in the Hub while their normal work was suspended (e.g. planning site visits). The Hub proved to be so valuable and appreciated by our communities that it was agreed to integrate it into the “business as usual” structure of the Council once the central funding ceased and it now has a strong focus on community resilience and well-being, post-Covid recovery and helping with the cost-of-living crisis.

Housing Delivery Strategy

In November 2022 the Council adopted a new Housing Delivery Strategy, which will enable SODC to deliver a range of genuinely affordable housing either directly or in partnership with 3rd parties such as Community Land Trusts or Registered Providers like SOHA. The first Council-owned homes will be built in Didcot – the first SODC-owned housing built for 25 years – while others have been delivered or approved in Henley and Thame. Alongside the new strategy there is a budget of several million pounds available by releasing CIL funds paid by developers over the years.

This strategy does not include the affordable homes provided by large-scale developers, which now account for 40% of all new sites.

Climate Action and Nature Restoration

Residents across the district agree that taking action to protect and restore nature is the number one priority, with reducing our carbon emissions and mitigating the impact of climate change ranking almost as highly. Over the past year the Council has strengthened its core Climate Action team and is now working with colleagues across the county and beyond to deliver a wide range of important projects. These include tree and hedgerow planting, decarbonising the Council's leisure centres, managing SODC-owned land in a more nature-friendly way and rolling out the EV charging infrastructure that will be so necessary to achieve our net zero targets. It has been very pleasing to see how many of the applications for SODC grants have focused on improving energy-efficiency and restoring nature to local communities.

The Council is part of a county-wide programme called PaZCO – Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire – for which a route map and action plan was developed during this past year. This sets out ambitious targets for reaching our net zero ambitions and identifies how partnership working can help the Council to implement its own Climate Action Plan.

A new Local Nature Partnership (LNP) for Oxfordshire has also been established, involving both private and public sector bodies; the Leader of SODC holds a seat on this group. Access to green spaces has been proven to benefit health and well-being as well as nature itself, so this is a priority focus for the LNP.

Improving our Finances and Investing to Save

The past year has seen an on-going focus on reducing the annual deficit in the Council's operating position. As with any organisation, this can be done by increasing revenue, reducing costs, or both. Action has been taken at all levels to deliver a budget for 2022-23 that meets the legal requirements for medium-term sustainability. Residents will see an increase of 3.6% in the SODC-portion of their Council Tax, well below the current rate of inflation.

In this past year, Council staff moved out of the Milton Park offices and into temporary shared accommodation at Abbey House in Abingdon. This building can accommodate approximately 40 SODC officers but its facilities are very limited (there is no space large enough for a Council meeting, for example) and is not easy to reach by public transport. While this move is saving the two Councils almost £1m per year in rent, it is not a long-term option as the building is owned by Vale of White Horse Council, which is currently assessing its own options. Our plans to build new, sustainable and modern offices at the SODC-owned Didcot Gateway site are progressing steadily as part of a wider regeneration project for this location. The new offices, should they receive planning permission, will include public spaces, landscaping and spare capacity to generate rental income, which will help to balance the books. Financially it makes sense to invest in a capital revenue-generating asset rather than continuing to spend money from our "current account" on rent.

Last year the Council appointed a specialist officer to identify and secure external sources of funding for special projects. This post has already paid for itself many times over by bringing in additional money to support climate action, housing schemes and the local economy.

Planning and Enforcement

This has been another busy year for the Planning team, both in its day-to-day business of assessing and monitoring applications and in the work of the Planning Policy team to develop the new Joint Local Plan with Vale of White Horse Council. The results of the "issues consultation" have previously been shared with the Parish Council; to repeat, the new plan will focus more strongly on environmental factors, sustainability and green infrastructure than on further housing growth. The current Local Plan (LP2035) remains in place and the Council was able to publish a robust and well-evidenced 5-year Housing Land Supply statement in July 2022. At the time of writing we await further news from Government about proposed planning reforms.

The new system to assess and take action on reported breaches of planning rules has been assessed by the cross-party Scrutiny Committee as being effective and proportionate; there will never be enough resource to take action on every planning breach, but the new system ensures that the most serious cases are acted upon promptly. We would like to thank the Parish Council for its continued support for the planning system in all its facets, including Neighbourhood Planning, assessing planning applications and submitting well-evidenced responses where necessary.

Attachment 2

REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS APRIL 2023 FROM CLLR KEVIN BULMER GENERAL OCC REPORT HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT SPARE SEATS SCHEME CANCELLATION

Prior to the Full Council meeting on 14 February, councillors were bombarded with emails from concerned parents and pupils alarmed by the administration's decision to withdraw the 'Home To School Spare Seats Scheme' in certain areas. At the Full Council meeting on 28 March, many concerned parents spoke passionately against the proposals. The Conservative Opposition then moved a motion containing the words *"This Council apologises unreservedly for its decision to send 'withdrawal' letters to parents under its Spare Seats scheme without parental or wider public consultation. The wording of its withdrawal letters caused significant anxiety and distress to parents in predominantly rural areas, with up to 235 children affected in the short term and as many as 1,384 students in the medium term."* The administration voted down the wording and passed a diluted motion, which Conservatives voted against.

OXFORD TRAFFIC FILTERS (THE FOUR SECTOR PLAN) MOTION At the same council meeting, concerned residents and businesses had earlier spoken against the 'Traffic Filter' scheme that will divide Oxford into four sectors for traffic purposes, and questioned the consultation process. Conservatives then moved a motion to re-run the consultation but were voted down by the administration.

COST OF OCC'S COUNTY HALL CAR PARK REPAIRS OCC has spent around £15,000 repairing the County Hall carpark. Shadow Cabinet Member for Highways Liam Walker said: *"I think residents will be frustrated as to why the car park outside county hall has been resurfaced whilst roads across Oxfordshire best resemble the surface of the moon in places. It's yet again clear that the coalition's focus is in the wrong place. They waste funds on projects like this, which could have fixed nearly 300 potholes instead."*

OXFORDSHIRE AWARDED £6.4M TO TACKLE ENERGY INEFFICIENCY Hundreds of Oxfordshire households struggling with fuel poverty will benefit from energy efficiency improvements after the county was awarded £6.417 million by the government. The [Home Upgrade Grant \(HUG2\)](#) funding will deliver whole-house retrofit installations to at least 310 properties across Oxfordshire that are not heated by mains gas – instead heated, for example, by electricity, liquefied petroleum gas, coal or oil.

OXFORD ZEZ ANNIVERSARY: OCC RAKES IN £700K FROM TRAFFIC SCHEME A scheme which charges motorists to drive through the city in an attempt to reduce emissions has raised almost £700,000 in fines in the year since it was launched. Britain's first Zero Emission Zone (ZEZ) began in Oxford in February 2022. The pilot scheme covers just a handful of city centre streets. Vehicles are charged between £2 and £10 per day depending on their emissions. There are discounts and exemptions for some road users. Zero emission vehicles, such as electric cars, can enter the pilot area free of charge. Initially warning notices were issued to drivers but from April 2022 OCC started handing out fines. Given the amount of money raised, critics are saying that the scheme has failed as a ZEZ, but succeeded as a cash generator. Controversial proposals are now being developed to extend the ZEZ to a wider area of the city. These measures are on top of the controversial Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) and the even more controversial 'Traffic Filter' proposals that will split Oxford into four sectors for cars without a permit.

HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES: SET FOR REFRESH IN MARCH AND APRIL People planning to visit Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) during March and April are being warned about a series of short closures to enable deep cleaning and essential maintenance to take place. This includes jet washing the sites and structures, repainting lines and safety areas, as well as other general work to improve the customer experience. The closing dates are: • Alkerton, near Banbury: Monday 20 and Tuesday 21 March • Ardley, near Bicester: Thursday 23 and Friday 24 March • Dix Pit, Stanton Harcourt: Monday 24 and Tuesday 25 April • Drayton, near Abingdon: Thursday 30 and Friday 31 March • Oakley Wood, near Wallingford: Thursday 20 and Friday 21 April • Redbridge, Oxford: Monday 17 and Tuesday 18 April • Stanford, near Farringdon: Monday 27 and Tuesday 28 March. More information can be found on OCC's [website](#), including details of nearest alternative sites during the closures.

HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES: DIY WASTE PRICES TO RISE The cost to customers of disposing of DIY and other chargeable waste at HWRCs will rise this month. While most items brought to OCC's seven HWRCs can be left free of charge, DIY waste – items such as rubble, soil, fence panels, work tops and sinks – is legally classified as industrial waste and incurs a charge. From 1 April, all items currently charged at £1.50 will now cost

£2. This covers most waste generated through home and garden renovations, including loft insulation, guttering, decking and fitted furniture. A list is available on the council's [website](#). The cost of disposing of bags of plasterboard will rise from £2.50 to £3.50, tyres from £5 to £6, but plasterboard sheets will remain at £10. Cash is not accepted, so visitors have to pay electronically before travelling. People who are unable to pay for items will not be permitted to deposit them. The Conservative Opposition is deeply concerned these measures will lead to an increase in fly tipping and will also present payment problems for those who do not have electronic payment facilities – contrary to OCC's 'Digital Exclusion' policy.

SPECIFIC OCC REPORT FOR GORING DIV From my sick bed been writing emails to Highways on various highways issues, drains blocked and flooding and people not getting a response to there enquiries about flooding. Highways emergency nr did not help a nr of house holders and thames water and fire brigade kept passing the buck according to reports ive been getting, hopefully this has been resolved incase we get more rain. The deteriorating condition of the highways (potholes seemly everywhere) is also a problem, the outbreak seems to have caught Highways by surprise and lack of investment (see the other occ priorities) has meant a unacceptable state of rural roads. I saw today the official mouthpiece of OCC administration is again asking for more government help, I and my colleagues can point to lots of schemes were the monies would have been better spent on the rural infrastructure. Too much as been spent on Oxford city and I make no apologies for banging on about rural highways.

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