



## MINUTES OF MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

At the Village Hall at 20:00 Thursday, January 11, 2024

### 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 of interests.
- 3 **Public Forum** – an opportunity for members of the public to express their point of view on any item on the agenda.
- 4 **Chairman's Announcements** 20:05

**Village Flooding** – As you will probably be aware, the Thames reached historic levels of flooding last weekend on the 6th and 7th January. The measurements at the Whitchurch and Mapledurham locks Sunday morning broke all previous records, or at least since 1947 – according to Richard Wingfield.

- The most affected areas were the south side of Eastfield Lane, the Mill pond area, and the Greyhound. Despite volunteers getting sandbags to barricade the Greyhound, water seeped through the floorboards and they needed to close the pub – as the Swan in Pangbourne had also closed earlier on Saturday. I understand the Greyhound will open again tonight.
  - Special thanks to Selby Armstrong, John Southey and others who supported the Greyhound with Sandbags.
  - Thanks to Cllr Parkes and her family and our Clerk Jane for locating traffic cones for use across from the Greyhound to reduce splashing from cars.
  - I understand others contributed humidifiers, carpet cleaners and other help. To the Greyhound.

- I initiated the Emergency Team procedure and asked street emergency contacts to check on neighbours who might be in need of support and to prepare the Village Hall in case it was needed.
  - Special thanks to Neil and Julie Huntington for their support to a number of Eastfield Lane residents with finding and making makeshift sandbags.
  - It was good to see many other residents helping neighbours in this situation.
  
- The village Flooding team is assessing the lessons from recent flooding with stakeholders in the village and working to prepare recommendations to reduce future flooding risks. One finding was that the improvements that were made to the Greyhound bowl in recent years with improved High Street drainage by the Greyhound have helped with flash flooding scenarios, but were insufficient to accommodate the volume of water coming from the river during the recent flooding at record river levels.
  
- In general, most residents seemed to just about cope and I am sure there will be lessons from this experience as we have to assume that the frequency of this type of flooding will only increase. I will discuss this with the emergency team members, but a couple of clear lessons:
  - We should reinforce our encouragement that vulnerable households maintain a supply of sandbags.
  - The Parish Council should consider securing a central sandbag/sand box supply to supplement residents supplies. We should also have some village traffic cones for urgent situations.

**Christmas Torch Procession** – Councillors Leach, Brazil, O’Grady and I joined the inaugural village Christmas torch procession that was organised by Alistair Dunstan and included volunteer musicians leading Christmas Carols. There were at least 20-30 residents who gathered at the Greyhound, processed down Eastfield Lane with many residents waving and clapping along the way. It was a very festive atmosphere and hopefully the sign of more to come in the future!

Residents Issues:

- **Lights out in upper and lower narrows** – I have continued communications with the OCC Electrical Officer - Traffic & Road Safety about lights on High Street that are out.
  - Light by the lower narrows at Ferryboat (number 2) is now to be fixed as of 9th January.
  - Light at upper narrows (no. 7) is still out – OCC is working on it but still seems to be having problems with it.
  - These faults were escalated to OCC along with County Cllr Kevin Bulmer. Separately a resident has raised a complaint to OCC, and our local Henley Standard reporter has even asked for responses from both the OCC and SSE press offices. A lot of work for two lights but sometimes that’s what it takes!

- **Repair of pavement at Ferryboat needs to be made good after OCC work** – I raised it to OCC and they said that have asked SSE to reinstate the faux brickwork as it was before. OCC to inspect by 17th March.
- **Eastfield Lane potholes** – Following concerns raised about potholes on Eastfield Lane, I raised a number of potholes to be repair as FixMyStreet Super user. Several potholes were fixed on 4th January, but some are outstanding. The Eastfield House builder has also filled some near the site entrance with gravel. I have asked OCC to inspect the road and clarify the process for having the road resurfaced once work is completed.
- **Verges on Eastfield lane** – The state of verges on Eastfield lane is deteriorating due to Eastfield House work and other construction work on the street, and now also from flooding. I raised our concerns to both OCC and Eastfield house builder, Zephyr X. The builder has been trying to manage the situation and have promised to reinstate the verges and reduce damage going forward but has not given a specific plan. I expect OCC to inspect the situation shortly.
- **Cleaning of streets and pavements on Hardwick Road and High Street** – the Clerk has requested this be done again. It was done in November but could use another clean now that the leaves have all fallen down. If it is not sufficiently cleaned by spring, I have discussed with Jill from the Green Team an option of requesting resident of the village to participate in a village “Spring Cleaning” by encouraging them to sweep the pavement in front of their homes.
- **Cleaning of bridge pavement and fixing potholes** – I also received complaints about debris on Bridge pavement. I contacted the bridge company and they have now cleaned the surface as of 4th January. I have also raised some potholes to them which they also plan to address.
- **Abandoned bike locked on to a pole near The Greyhound in Eastfield Lane** – Richard Wingfield has put an article on the website to see if anyone claims it. If not I will ask that it be removed on FixMyStreet.
- **Posters on the Village sign** – A large blue poster advertising fastened to the village’s welcome signpost advertises a Goring Gap Walk which is over four months away, in May. It seems to dominate the visual entrance to the village and distracting from the Speedwatch sign. The resident suggests it could be moved, if only to the next pole along, to its right.
- **Vegetation overhanging from Walled Garden** – I raised concern about overhanging fig trees on Walled Garden to the owner, but waiting for a response. Given that the they are selling the property now, I suggest that we organise a Green Team working party to cut it back.
- **Toll Booth appears to be out of cards** – Implication is that new users without a card would need to pay the full price and not able to get a discount. Not a PC issue, but I have asked Bridge company clarify the situation.

5 To approve minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council meeting of December 14, 2023.

**Resolution:** The Council voted to approve the minutes.

6 Planning Applications – to discuss and agree Council’s response to the following:

20:30

6.1 P23/S4171/FUL

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

Replacement dwelling involving demolition of existing house and garage.

**Resolution:** The Parish Council voted to submit the comments to ensure there was no issue overlooking the preschool and access issues with neighbours were resolved. The Parish Council supported the comments from Little Holme regarding future landscape changes need to comply with AONB policies and permitted use of land.

6.2 P23/S4055/S73

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

Variation of conditions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 13 and 14 on application P11/S0126 (Application under S73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for Variation of condition 14 (Approved Plans) on application P11/S0126 granted by appeal decision APP/Q3115/A/13/219268 (Partial demolition of existing care home, Eastfield House, construction of extensions and associated works and change of use of land at the rear of the home from C3 to C2 to provide additional external amenity space) to allow changes to internal layout; formation of dormers at second floor; additional plant room; part retention of existing outbuilding; and erection of summer house within rear garden).

**Resolution:** The Parish Council voted to submit the comment that they have no objection to Zephyr X planting a cedar tree near the entrance, but we question whether a cedar tree may be too large for the plot of land.

6.3 P23/S1070/FUL

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

Discharge of condition 11 (Ecological Mitigation (details required) in application P23/S1070/FUL 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 and as amplified by additional information received 31 July 2023).

**Resolution:** The Parish Council noted that SODC has now approved the condition so there is no point in making comments.

7 To receive reports from the representatives of Oxfordshire County Council and South Oxfordshire District Council 21:00

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

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

8 **Finance:** 20:45

8.1 To approve the payment schedule for January:

Payment	Sub-total	VAT	Total
Staff expenditure			£541.80

**Resolution:** The Council voted to approve the payment.

8.2 Receipts:

Receipts	Amount

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

9.0 Motion to approve the Terms of Reference for the Ruth Popper Playground Working Group and subsequently published on the Parish Council section of the Whitchurch-on-Thames website (Attachment 6)– Cllr Higley seconded by Cllr Leach 21:05

9.1 The Council agreed that the issue of the boundary must be resolved before any planning could be done.

- Resolution:** The Parish Council voted to approve the Motion.
- 10.0 Motion to approve the Safeguarding Policy (Attachment 7)– Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Parkes 21:10
- 10.1 The Parish Council discussed the need for this policy. The Clerk advised that the OALC recommended that the Council had this policy in place for any Working Groups, e.g., Litter picking etc. that included children. Other groups would have to have their own policy (e.g., the School, Church etc.).
- Resolution:** The Parish Council voted to approve the policy.
- 11.0 Motion to send a request to OCC Highways for the badly potholed and crumbling carriageway of Eastfield Lane to be resurfaced, apart from the section at the east end which was resurfaced a few years ago. Also, that the damaged verges are reinstated and where there are none, that kerbs are placed on each side of the lane to protect the verges - Cllr Smith seconded by Cllr Higley 21:15
- 11.1 **Resolution:** The Parish Council voted to defer this agenda item.
- 12.0 OCC Cabinet Meeting re: Parking Plan for the Village. – Cllr Smith 21:20
- 12.1 Cllr Smith advised that anyone could attend this meeting and speak for 3 minutes. The Chair and Vice-Chair will attend.
- The feedback from OCC was positive. They said that the consultation indicated that there was clear support for this plan. There will be a few revisions based on the feedback:
- OCC now says that there will be 4-5 car parking spaces in the upper narrows instead of 3 previously proposed;
  - OCC will also remove one of the resident spaces near Whitchurch House that will help with a difficult turning around a blind corner for those exiting the drive at Swanston House – the double yellow lines will also help to keep that area clear;
  - At the time of the meeting OCC were going to review the provisional parking spaces outside Mallards to see if they could be moved southwards following some feedback from residents. Following a site visit from OCC it is now the Parish Council's understanding that because of proximity to the bus stop OCC do not believe these spaces can be moved after all.
  - On the east side of the Hugh Street near Racquets, the two parking spaces will now also be designated as residents parking spaces.
- The overall outcome is that OCC has been responsive to residents' feedback. If approved, OCC will review the parking scheme again in 6-12 months.
- 13 To review progress on any open actions from previous Parish Council meetings and agree any revision of actions on the action list.
- 14 To confirm the date and time of the next meetings is Thursday, February 8, 2024 at 20:00. 21:30
- 15 Confidential discussion for thank you notes from the Parish Council
- It was agreed to send thank you's to Alistair Dunstan, Graeme and Rosemary Pearce, and the Neil and Julie Huntington, John Southy and Selby Armstrong.
- 16 Meeting closed. 21:40

Attachment 1

## Report to Whitchurch on Thames Parish Council January 2024

### Joint Local Plan

The consultation on the New Joint Local Plan has opened yesterday, and is open until 24 February. A Local Plan looks ahead fifteen years and plans how much development is needed in an area, like new homes, jobs, roads and schools, and where they should go. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are working together to produce a new Joint Local Plan.

This plan will be different from the last Local Plans for our area, in particular it doesn't need to plan for the same scale of growth as last time. Our focus will be to continue to build out most of the sites already planned, consider development on new brownfield sites, and make sure the new policies are stronger on zero carbon development, nature recovery, protecting the countryside and providing facilities for communities.

I would urge everyone to have a look at this, and to respond to the consultation. <https://theconversation.southandvale.gov.uk/corporate-services/jlp-preferred-options-consultation/>

### Rough Sleepers

The recent cold spell has resulted in the SODC Severe Weather Emergency Plan (SWEP) being activated, this provides overnight accommodation for rough sleepers.

From SODC Facebook

*If you see someone sleeping rough, or you are homeless and in an emergency situation you can call us on 01235 422 410 or go to Streetlink's website [thestreetlink.org.uk](http://thestreetlink.org.uk)*

*With freezing temperatures expected over the coming days, emergency beds will be made available for rough sleepers while these conditions persist.*

*This is part of our severe weather emergency protocol which is an additional layer of support.*

*We actively work with people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, the whole year round. Every effort is made to help people move into long term accommodation.*

*If you come across someone rough sleeping, you can call our housing needs team. See our website for details on housing and homeless support [southoxon.gov.uk/housing](http://southoxon.gov.uk/housing)*

SODC also has outreach workers who search out for rough sleepers

### Oakley Wood Recycling Centre – Tip

The government has banned charges for depositing household DIY waste, so there is now no charge, but there are limits as to how much and how often you can go, and you also have to prebook a visit via a County Council website.

The objective of this was to reduce fly tipping, but from my experience of flytipping – which I have frequently reported – it is all too often stuff such as old mattresses, furniture or general household waste that could be taken to the tip anyway with no charge.

In my view, the sort of people who flytip, and who dump industrial quantities in quiet lanes, are not going to alter their behaviour through this change, which merely inconveniences the rest of us and reduces the Councils income.

**REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS JANUARY 2024  
FROM CLLR KEVIN BULMER**

**GENERAL OCC REPORT**

**BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2024/25**

As previously reported, the Liberal Democrat/Green administration at OCC has revealed its first draft of Budget proposals for 2024/25. The opposition parties have criticised the administration for failing to engage with them at an early stage, given the Budget cannot pass without opposition support, and are currently developing their own Budget proposals. A meeting of Full Council on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February will vote on the options.

**OCC SPENDS £10,000 ON COLOURING-IN BOOKS PROMOTING 20MPH SCHEME**

OCC has come under criticism for spending £10,000 on colouring-in books for schoolchildren promoting its 30mph to 20mph sign-changing exercise. Opponents say that not only is it a waste of money that could be spent repairing potholes, but it also fails to provide children with a balanced view of the controversial scheme.



**RIVER LEVELS IN OXFORDSHIRE**

Consistent rainfall during December has followed a wetter than average Autumn. This has in turn led to higher than normal river levels on many watercourses in Oxfordshire. 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 – can be found here:

<https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/river-levels-in-oxfordshire/>

There are also links to the Met Office's weather warning bulletins.

**PRIORITY ACTION PLAN PUBLISHED TO IMPROVE SEND SERVICES**

On 18 December) OCC published [the local area partnership priority action plan](#) to improve services and support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The plan responds to [Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission's inspection](#) report of SEND partnership services in July. A draft plan was submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) on 24 October and was approved by Ofsted on 12 December. The plan sets out what will be achieved across five priority action areas.

- Gathering and acting on the views of children and young with SEND and their families.
- Developing effective communications systems across the partnership to ensure coordinated approaches.
- Improved timeliness and quality assurance of education, health and care plans.
- Commissioning of services to meet the needs of children and young people and their families.

- Producing plans that are coproduced with children and young people and their families, which are rigorously monitored.

The local area partnership includes Oxfordshire County Council, NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board and the parent carer forum (PCF), the official body for the voice of parent carers. The PCF will be directly involved in activities in the priority action plan that lead to improving services and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

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