

WHITCHURCH ON THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Whitchurch on Thames Parish Council on Monday 2nd March 2009 in the village hall

Present:

Cllr Matilda Oppenheimer (chairman), Cllr Vincent Aldridge (vice chairman), Cllr Nigel Grove, Cllr Harry Butterworth, Cllr Keith Brooks, Cllr Liz Robinson

In attendance:

Jo Wheeler (parish clerk), District Cllr Pearl Slatter

126. Apologies for absence

Cllr Nigel Cabeldu, County Cllr John Farrow

127. Declarations of interest

None

128. Neighbourhood Watch

Carol Rudd and Clare Stroud, from Thames Valley Police (TVP), explained to the parish council how parishioners can set up Neighbourhood Watch schemes. There is usually a scheme for each street and the starting point is finding a coordinator and deputy coordinator. District Councillor Slatter offered to become a coordinator for the High Street and Councillor Brooks a coordinator for Eastfield Lane.

They explained that an alternative to setting up a neighbourhood watch scheme is to receive TVP community messages which include useful information about police surgeries, crime reductions events, crime statistics etc.

Action: to place advert in Bulletin, website and on notice boards to encourage residents to set up schemes.

129. Public forum

None

130. Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes of the 5th January 2009 agreed as a true record.

Chairman _____ Date _____

131. Thames Valley Police update

Mark Bell informed the council that there has been an arrest for the burglary in Eastfield Lane.

He discussed the problem parking at the primary school in Eastfield Lane. The parking means residents of Eastfield Lane are finding their driveways are being obstructed. Mark Bell recommended that residents erect polite 'please keep driveway clear' signs to remind the offenders that it is an offence to obstruct a driveway.

He reported that High Street parking has improved and there aren't many cars on the pavement. The parish council thanked Councillor Butterworth for hand delivering the letters and speaking to residents, asking them not to park on the pavement or obstruct the junction.

He mentioned that the homeless person sleeping on the doorway of the church hasn't caused a problem and has been offered assistance.

132. Matters arising from minutes

Councillor Oppenheimer contacted the school secretary to arrange an appointment to speak to the headmistress to discuss the speeding problem. She is waiting for the headmistress to reply and will provide an update at the next meeting.

It has been confirmed there will be a public inquiry for the proposed toll bridge increase. When a date for the public inquiry has been set the parish council will arrange a meeting to start to prepare their case. The parish council resolved to make a representation at the public inquiry. The parish council resolved to keep discussions about the toll increase proposal separate from the pressure group, Toll Freeze, as the council has different responsibilities. It agreed to continue to keep neighbouring parish councils informed.

The parish council discussed the road review project and resolved that the parish clerk will contact Oxfordshire County Council about the outstanding work on the list.

133. Energy saving/sustainability projects

Discussion about the grants being offered by the Chiltern Society, to parish councils, to fund local sustainability projects.

Action: Councillor Oppenheimer will contact WoTHabs and the school to see if they have any suggestions. Parish clerk to put information in the Bulletin.

134. Sheepwash Lane

Cllr Oppenheimer informed the parish council that she has been communicating with Tom Christie from the Environment Agency about river access rights at the end of

Sheepwash Lane. The area appears as a private riverside plot with no highway status especially as an unauthorised gate has been erected. Tom Christie is liaising with South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council to establish what public rights are there and what the possibilities are for improving the area as an attractive riverside destination for parishioners and other wayfarers. Cllr Oppenheimer will report back at the next meeting.

135. Website redesign

Responses to the parish plan questionnaires showed that people think the website isn't very user friendly. The parish council resolved that people who are interested in improving the website should meet to discuss ideas however the parish council will continue to manage the content. Councillor Oppenheimer will provide interested parties with each other's email addresses and encouraged people to take this forward.

136. District councillor report

Councillor Slatter handed out copies of the 'Frequently Asked Questions' paper to all parish councillors. It aims to answer questions about the new waste and recycling contract. Councillor Slatter agreed to provide an update at the annual assembly in April and bring paper copies for residents to look through.

Councillor Slatter also brought a report about the council tax which showed the percentage of tax paid to the parish council and district council. Action: publish these figures on the parish website and include link to SODC website.

Councillors discussed the continued problem of dog fouling. Action: include reminder in Bulletin. Councillor Slatter will order more signs.

137. County councillor report

None

138. Planning

New applications:

10 Swanston Field –P09/E0106 - no objection – previous plans already approved

Rosemead - P08/E1231/RET– decided in between meetings – no objection but concern for neighbours

Decisions:

31 Swanston Field - P08/E1307/RET – granted

The Vines, High Street - P08/E1244 - granted

Chairman _____ Date _____

139. Finance

Payments at meeting:

Payee	Description	Amount £
Sarah Butterworth	Bulletin printing	367.00
J Wheeler	Jan & Feb salary plus expenses	870.00
SODC	Parish plan questionnaire printing	285.50
Philip Weir	Website hosting	99.48
Information Commissioner	FOI register	35.00

Payments in between meetings:

Payee	Description	Amount £
Kate Preston	Final version of village plan	300.00

Payments received:

None

140. Other reports

a) Village plan report

Cllr Butterworth informed everyone that there is a meeting on Monday 9th March to sign of the final version of the village plan.

b) Allotments

Nothing to report

c) Transport

Nothing to report

d) Cricket Field

Chairman _____ Date _____

Councillor Oppenheimer reported on the meeting with Paula Fox (SODC planning officer) about the purchase of the cricket field for public use. SODC stated that it is outside the usual planning application remit and an application will need to be prepared with a focus on the community benefits. Councillor Oppenheimer has written to the owners to recommend the way forward and has arranged to meet with them to discuss progressing it further. An update will be provided at the next meeting.

e) Village Maintenance

The trees next to the pre-school are still causing a problem, however they are not classed as unsafe. The parish council suggested the pre-school get in touch with the solicitors or the owners of the property.

f) Toll Bridge

As discussed, the Department for Transport will conduct a public inquiry in June and the parish council will make a representation.

141. Correspondence received and distributed

Parish council resolved to sign the contract with BT to transfer ownership of the telephone kiosk.

Parish clerk read out letter from SODC asking if electronic versions of planning applications. Council agreed that paper copies are much more useful because they are easier to view around the table.

142. Any other business

Councillor Oppenheimer confirmed that the parish council has purchased the village hall. The money has been sent and the contract signed.

The parish council resolved that (based on advice from the Charities Commission) a management committee be set up rather than the parish council being sole trustees.

Meeting closed at 9.45pm

143. Next meeting:

Annual parish assembly 14th April 2009