

# *Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council*

**MINUTES** of the Parish Council meeting held in the village hall, Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2016, commencing at 8.00pm.

## **PRESENT**

Chairman	Keith Brooks
Vice-Chairman	Jim Donahue
Councillors	David Bowen Caroline Hart Rachel Hatcher Jonathan Steward
Clerk	Felipa House
County Councillor	Kevin Bulmer
District Councillor	Rob Simister

Public:

Resident of Eastfield Lane, Richard Wingfield, Terri & Matt Lorrimore, Amanda Dyke, Kate Ireland, Caroline Cresswell, Liz Steward, Bill Lewis, Mrs. Bulmer.

## **1. Apologies for absence**

Cllr. Polansky.

## **2. Declarations of interest**

Cllr. Steward (gardening contracts in the village).

**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.

Liz Steward mentioned that the tree on the village green in memory of Pam Philipson's husband had died. Pam Philipson has recently died & the family would like a replacement tree as well as a plaque in memory of both Mr. & Mrs. Philipson.

Liz Steward also wanted to discuss some ideas for the Queen's birthday celebration in June.

Most of those present at this meeting live around the Hardwick Road/High Street junction & had come to discuss the recent spate of parking tickets that have been issued to cars parked in this area. Terri Lorrimore said that this was a new development; neighbours have previously used one parking space each & had an amicable, informal arrangement in place using courtesy & common sense. The residents now feel very uncertain about where they could/should park. What is classified as irresponsible/obstructive parking? Some of the residents have already appealed their fines. No-one from the police has spoken to the residents. Cllr. Brooks had emailed Inspector Mark Harling, who said it was important that the residents & police keep up a dialogue. Cllr. Brooks is awaiting a response from PC Barbara Taylor to discuss how residents should park. Cllr. Bulmer reiterated that residents do not have an automatic right to park outside their house. He thinks that some formal parking restrictions will be in place but he doesn't know what these might be. The police are the only ones who can enforce parking regulations. Parking in the village will be addressed as part of the Neighbourhood Plan but this is a longer-term solution. The residents in this area have already formed their own group to look at short-term solutions; either Cllr. Hatcher or Hart will now join this group as a Parish Council representative. Terri Lorrimore will provide notes & names to them. Even if additional white lines were to be requested & painted they can only be used to discourage parking &

cars would still be allowed to legally park on them. Would it be possible to ask for a relaxation of the 'No parking within 10m of a junction' rule here? Cllr. Bulmer is petitioning for a new rule regarding parking enforcement so that decisions regarding local parking are moved down to town/parish council level rather than being decided higher up the Government.

Bill Lewis lives next to 'The Haven' in Eastfield Lane. This has recently been sold & the new owner, a developer, has proceeded to partially demolish the house. A pre-application to demolish the house & build 2 new dwellings has been submitted, according to the Eastfield Lane resident, but no case officer appointed as yet. Cllr. Brooks has contacted SODC Planning & an enforcement officer will be coming to inspect. Cllr. Simister volunteered to help however he could.

#### **4. Agree minutes of Parish Council meeting 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016**

These were approved as a true record.

#### **5. District councillor's report**

Cllr. Simister had circulated his report before the meeting. He has received notification of Cllr. Bowen's application to have 'The Greyhound' public house listed as an Asset of Community Value. This is based on the assertion that 'The Ferryboat' is more of a destination gastro-pub, often visited by people from outside the village, whereas 'The Greyhound' is generally used more by locals & as a community hub with its regular events. Cllr. Simister stated that if the ACV were successful then the village would have to be prepared to buy & run it. Its value could be £250-280,000 as a going concern. Cllr. Simister has no influence in this area but will send details of the 'Pub is the hub' group that helps villages run & own their own pubs. <http://www.pubisthehub.org.uk/> South Oxfordshire recently came first in a Halifax survey of the best places to live in the country <http://static.halifax.co.uk/assets/pdf/mortgages/pdf/South-Oxfordshire-provides-best-quality-of-life-for-rural-dwellers-29th-February-2016-Housing-Release.pdf> Back-office services (e.g. HR & expenses) within SODC's Corporate Services are due to be contracted-out in an agreement with 4 other councils, which will save SODC large amounts of money. The Oxfordshire devolution bid involves 7 councils within the area, of which SODC is one. Cllr. Bulmer mentioned here that there are lots of competing visions & how they would all work needs to be looked at. The current council would cease to exist & new structures would be put in place. Efficiencies are being looked at, but what *is* efficiency? <http://www.oxfordshire.vision/> The Police and Crime Commissioner Election is taking place on 5<sup>th</sup> May.

#### **6. County councillor's report**

Cllr. Bulmer suggested that residents write to their MP to complain about parking issues, which would support his petition.

Street lighting – SSE have unexpectedly cancelled their contract with OCC as from 1<sup>st</sup> April. OCC now has to implement new maintenance arrangements. There will be emergency 'make safe' arrangements only for the next 18 months.

Potholes – OCC trialled 'The Dragon', which is like a flamethrower for potholes & very good at repairing them very quickly with less manpower. OCC now have exclusive use of it within Oxfordshire. Winter repairs for potholes do not 'take' due to the weather & can therefore only be temporary during these months. The number of potholes in the county has decreased. Most local roads in the county really need to be rebuilt, at a cost of some £240 million; OCC's budget is £700,000.

Liz Steward said that she felt that the money to be spent on the proposed repaving of The Cut would be better spent on repaving the roads.

HGVs – companies will be penalised financially if their drivers use roads that are unsuitable for their loads due to continued use of satnavs. OCC keep trying but there is not much Government response as yet.

Recycling centres will be opening until 8pm on Thursdays until the end of September.

Cllr. Bulmer had no further information on the FLOWER scheme (using OCC's own fleet of buses during the day to help form a replacement bus service once local bus subsidies stop in July).

## **7. Planning**

Elm Cottage, Hartslock Bridleway. Certificate of lawful development. The owners have applied for a certificate of lawful development on the basis that they have carried out their business/es on-site for at least the last 10 years. The Council was concerned about the future ramifications of such a certificate & whether the business could then expand unchecked. Cllr. Donahue visited the site & spoke to residents of the bridleway, one of whom made a complaint about the application. No residents have made a formal complaint to SODC, though. Cllr. Brooks spoke to the SODC case officer but is still unsure. Cllr. Bowen will prepare a letter for the Clerk to submit with this application.

P16/S0916/FUL Avoca Farm, Hartslock Bridleway. Demolition of existing dwelling & replacement with new dwelling. Cllr. Donahue met the new owners & saw the site. The new dwelling would be more in keeping with the area & set further back from the road. The Council voted unanimously for 'No strong views' to be submitted.

P16/S1031/HH Walnut Cottage, Hardwick Road. Small rear extension. The Council voted unanimously for 'No strong views' to be submitted.

## **8. Finance** Approve payments/note receipts

Monthly salary for the Clerk

Expenses for the Clerk for village green compost bin (£104.99)

Invoice from Collins for gardening items (£215.49)

Annual donation to the village hall (£1,000)

Invoice from SODC for half-yearly dog-bin emptying (£100.46)

Invoice from Steward Grounds Maintenance for March gardening services (£250.00).

The Council agreed that an annual budget of £500 would be available for 'Whitchurch in bloom'. Further spending would need to be brought before the Council by Cllr. Steward for approval.

## **9. Village green**

Cllr. Steward will investigate the purchase of a replacement tree for the Philipson family. The Clerk will look at possible plaques for the tree.

Cllr. Steward has been issued guidelines for the maintenance work he carries out in the village.

There is some confusion about what needs to be done to the beech hedge. Cllr. Donahue will discuss with Gill Goodwin of WoTHabs & ask for clarification. No action will be taken yet, although the broken fence will be removed.

2 working parties took place recently, for which there were many volunteers from all village green user groups.

Cllr. Brooks has obtained 2 quotes for a replacement gate for the allotments : Purdy Gates - £940 + VAT & EvaDor, £1473 including VAT & fitting. Cllr. Brooks felt the latter were more suitable; he will contact the company to obtain a site visit & forward the information to Cllr. Polansky, who will liaise with the Allotment Society.

## **10. Community First Oxfordshire**

The Clerk had received information from Community First Oxfordshire (formerly Oxfordshire Rural Community Council) regarding annual membership. Having looked at the documents the Council decided not to renew its membership at the moment.

## **11. TAPAG**

School access via Muddy Lane – the school had asked whether the Council could finance an improvement to Muddy Lane. The Council felt that this would require a lot of work & hence be extremely expensive. The Council decided that this was not feasible for the moment but will be included within plans for the potential relocation of the village hall.

The Clerk has now received 3 quotations for repaving ‘The Cut : £12,568.40 + VAT from Oxford City Council, £4,780 + VAT from Hazell & Jefferies, & £5,760 + VAT from Reading Asphalt Co. The Council unanimously agreed the appointment of Hazell & Jefferies for this project. The Clerk will liaise with them & discuss the guarantees they could offer to limit future costs.

Cllr. Polansky distributed information before the meeting regarding a new crossing-point at the tollbooth. The proposals from the Bridge Company & its engineers were endorsed & approved. Cllr. Polansky will liaise with the Bridge Company.

Wells House bollard – this has been knocked over several times. Cllr. Brooks contacted OCC, who stated that it had originally been placed too close to the carriageway due to a utility plant in the footway. Due to lack of budgets it would not be replaced. Cllr. Brooks has replied, asking that it be moved to a more suitable location.

Residents have complained about parking at the village hall during Camera Club meetings. Cllr. Steward has emailed the Club but received no reply. Cllr. Donahue will discuss with them.

## **12. Village hall replacement project**

Cllr. Hart’s ‘Village Pavilion Project’ document is now available on the website. She has been receiving & collating comments.

## **13. Village environment/maintenance**

SODC would be willing to sell the site of the old Polish church to the Council for £2,000, or lease it to them for £100 annually. The Council resolved to rent the site initially. The Clerk will arrange this.

Cllr. Steward has completed weedkilling in the High Street & has now started in Manor Road. He will move on to Swanston Field.

Cllr. Bowen has spoken to Thames Travel & to the Chairman of Goring Heath Parish Council, who might be interested in joining with Whitchurch Parish Council to ensure the 143 bus service continues through the villages. Geoff Weir has stated that he will reduce the toll for the bus from £3.50 to £1, although the Parish Council will have to make up the difference. The potential cost of running the bus service would be approximately £3,000 annually. Pamela Bale, Pangbourne Councillor for West Berkshire Council, has united the parishes on the Berkshire side of the river to enable the bus service to continue there.

Cllr. Steward & his wife have offered to help organise the local celebration for the Queen’s birthday & various suggestions were made. The Clerk will put an article in the next ‘Bulletin’ & will work with the Stewards.

**14. Neighbourhood Plan**

The initial meeting for the Neighbourhood Plan will be on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May, from 11am – 3pm. It is hoped that refreshments can be provided. The Clerk will check availability of the village hall. Subsequent, smaller meetings could be combined with the Art Cafe held in The Old Stables every Saturday morning. Cllr. Hatcher requested a budget for printing posters & the Council agreed this spend. Cllr. Hatcher will ask for volunteers for the sub-groups before the meeting, as well as signing up further volunteers on the day. She will also prepare a proposal, following Neighbourhood Plan guidelines. She has signed up to a mapping service, which will enable her to produce the parish map required for the Plan.

**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

The Chairman spoke to Cllr. Steward about a private matter & a report will be submitted to the Clerk.

Cllr. Donahue has collected all the entries from the primary school for the competition to design a new village sign. He will create a survey for the website & ask residents to decide which aspects of village life they want to be represented. This will then enable elements of several of the entries to be used.

**21. Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2016 at 8pm.

*Meeting closed at 10.15pm.*

**Signed.....**  
**Chairman**

**Date.....**