

Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council

MINUTES of the Parish Council meeting held in ‘The Old Stables’, Tuesday 11th July 2017, commencing at 8.00pm.

PRESENT

Chairman	Keith Brooks
Councillors	Dave Bowen Rachel Hatcher Denise Huxtable Carrie Leadbeater-Hart
Clerk	Felipa House

Public:

Leslie Maynerd, Leslie Prater, Mel Taylor, Mrs. Dolby, Nick Leadbeater, Alex Cardinal von Widdern & 2 other residents.

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr. Jim Donahue, Cllr. Simister & Cllr. Bulmer.

2. Declarations of interest

Cllr. Leadbeater-Hart explained that, as a chartered engineer, she was working on the plans for the new village pavilion. She is providing her expertise free of charge.

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.

Leslie Maynerd mentioned the local gardener who could assist with village maintenance, such as weeding. Cllr. Bowen expressed concern over issues with the Council’s insurance & liability & the responsibilities when employing someone. Cllr. Brooks stated that he would speak to the Council’s current maintenance contractor regarding adding it to his contract.

Leslie also mentioned that MOWS are hoping to landscape the other side of the church drive, with clearing taking place in the autumn. Planting might be in the shape of a boat, or possibly an actual boat will be used. She also confirmed that she was happy to put up a ‘No dog-fouling’ sign on her fence.

Mrs. Dolby mentioned that the road outside her house needed repairs, as did the path to the toll bridge. Cllr. Hatcher will add these to FixMyStreet. Mrs. Dolby also mentioned that the drain in the High Street near Thames Bank & Peach House needed clearing.

Mrs. Dolby was very concerned about parking in the High Street. Cllr. Hatcher mentioned the recent survey that had been sent to High Street residents & said she would ensure that Mrs. Dolby received a copy. TAPAG are now collating all the responses they have received & have also consulted with PCSO Mark Bell, who has seen what measures are taken in other villages. Some ideas include yellow lines in the High Street with a time limit, which could be monitored for the first month to ensure efficacy, or the installation of parking bays, including vacant ones that would ease the flow of traffic. Leslie Prater mentioned that time-restricted parking had worked very well in Goring, but that there would, however, have to be exemptions for residents to stop them being ticketed. Roundabouts at the High Street junctions of Manor Road & Eastfield Lane are also under consideration, as are parking permits, although Cllr. Bowen felt that the cost of this would be prohibitive & it would be a difficult

system to manage. Mel Taylor asked whether a raised crossing in the High Street was being considered, as this is particularly important for the school run. She also asked whether extra ‘School’ signs could be requested for the end of Eastfield Lane & the top of Muddy Lane. Cllr. Brooks will discuss with PCSO Bell.

Nick Leadbeater stated that he felt traffic had worsened during the last 2 months & asked why this might be. The Council had no reply.

Mrs. Dolby also asked whether pollution levels in the High Street had been monitored. Cllr. Hatcher said no but that it would be possible to measure the volume of traffic for a month or so using a traffic monitoring device. She would ideally like to see the church driveway & Old Stables used to provide additional parking, perhaps for funerals.

Residents also mentioned that residents’ car parking spaces should be near their homes & that there is a need for car parking spaces for tradespeople.

There will be an open morning at the Art Cafe on Saturday 22nd July for TAPAG.

4. Agree minutes of Annual Parish Council meeting 9th May 2017 & Parish Council meeting 13th June 2017

These were both approved as a true record.

5. District councillor’s report

Cllr. Simister was not present.

6. County councillor’s report

Cllr. Bulmer had sent his report before the meeting. This included confirmation that OCC’s 7 recycling centres will remain open in the medium-term, due to a new management contract that has been awarded. Non-household waste items will be charged at an increased £1.50 per item once the new contract begins on 1st October. Other items mentioned included the adoption of OCC’s new minerals & waste core strategy & a £4 million boost for the Better Broadband for Oxfordshire programme.

7. Planning

Outline planning permission for P17/S1961/O, the Sports Pavilion, Eastfield Lane, has been withdrawn as there is enough detail in the plan to apply directly for full planning permission. The money already paid (£385) will pay towards the full planning application cost of £770. The Forestry Commission has stated that the pavilion cannot be built within 9 metres of any mature tree, which potentially precludes it from being on the site of the current pavilion. Altering the location of the pavilion was discussed & several options put forward. Users, such as the cricket club, have stated their wish for there to be showers; a local resident has very kindly offered to fund these. The pavilion will therefore be 15% bigger than the initial plan, which SODC thinks will be suitable. Cllr. Brooks has been told that there is only £100,000 for the whole of South Oxfordshire in the second round of funding for SODC projects this year; he therefore suggested that it might be better to put in a bid early next year when the new funding round reopens. Fundraising could also be done through the Art Cafe.

P17/S1934/FUL, The Haven, Eastfield Lane. Minor changes to elevation. The Council voted to submit ‘No strong views’.

P17/S2382/AG, Butler’s Farm, Goring Heath Road, Whitchurch Hill. Erection of barn for storage of animal fodder. The Council voted to submit ‘No strong views’.

8. Finance Approve payments/note receipts

Monthly salary for the Clerk

Invoice from Eldon Tree Services for tree work near church drive (£100)

Invoice from OALC for booklets (£10.40)

Backdated working-from-home allowance for the Clerk.

The Clerk explained that she had calculated the amount of working-from-home allowance she was entitled to. The Council voted to pay her this as a backdated sum & for each month going forward.

9. Village green

Cllr. Bowen felt that a skate park on the green would cost around £40,000. This would be for 2 ramps, a half-pipe & installation. The Council felt that this cost could not currently be justified unless substantial external funding could be found. Positive feedback had been received for a pump track/basketball but since a MUGA would cost perhaps £15,000 it was decided that the Council would concentrate on finding funding for the new pavilion. A youth shelter was also suggested, such as that on Woodcote's recreation ground. If a facility is to be installed it must be something that is actually wanted & will continue to be used.

The goal mouths have been repositioned due to wear & tear. Cllr. Brooks has been liaising with Alistair Aitchison, who is in charge of the football team, & assisted the move. Cllr. Brooks is sourcing a plumber who can fit a new tap to the existing supply at the top of the field so that the new turf can be watered once it has been laid. The Council agreed to fund the goalmouth restoration costs for the football club. It was also noted that spikes had become detached from the nets, posing a safety hazard.

The email in May from a concerned resident regarding best practice for the location of the potential skate park was discussed. Cllr. Bowen had investigated all 4 points raised within this email & felt that its distance from the school was satisfactory so as to minimise any noise disturbance. Were the building to proceed then all appropriate guidelines would be investigated & adhered to. The green was obtained for leisure & recreation, which encompasses all sports, & any planned building would take account of its location within an AONB.

It appears that the cricket club charges the juniors for part of its annual costs. There was recently some confusion over the booking of the green, which led to a double booking & some disgruntlement. This matter will be taken to the Village Green Working Group so that use & booking of the green can be clarified.

10. Village green working group/pavilion

As discussed in point 9. above

11. TAPAG (Traffic and Parking Action Group)

As discussed in point 3. above.

12. Village hall refurbishment project

BP Castrol will be having an internal meeting about local facilities & will contact the Clerk afterwards.

One of the water heaters is not working. The Clerk will call out a plumber.

13. Village environment/maintenance

The final proofs for the village sign have been received. The Council voted to order it as well as the AONB sign.

Cllr. Brooks will discuss the Polish memorial garden site with Sally Woolhouse.

14. Village /Neighbourhood Plans

Cllr. Brooks mentioned that there will be an article in this month's 'Bulletin' giving an update on the last meeting.

15. Length of term for Chair

It was decided that there should be no maximum length of term for the Chair. Anyone interested in becoming Chair should express their interest during the Council meeting in April, stating why they would be suitable for the role. Councillors would then have a month in which to decide their voting intentions before the annual meeting in May of each year.

16. Communication

Cllr. Brooks said that it had been brought to his attention by some of the councillors that some of the comments appearing on the website's message board were incorrect. The rest of the Council felt that this was merely an expression of free speech. In future, if an article or comment appears that is factually incorrect then Council members should attempt to remedy this, but generally the website should be left as an independent communication form.

Mel Taylor asked that Council meeting dates be posted on Facebook. Cllr. Leadbeater-Hart will do this.

Cllrs. Hatcher & Huxtable stated that they had been trialling Slack as an alternative communication tool. It can be used on laptops & 'phones & has different channels for different topics. They will send the Council a test link to trial.

17. Parish councillor vacancy

The Clerk has thus far received 1 application for the parish councillor vacancy.

18. 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 mentioned that some youngsters had been caught trespassing in Eastfield House at the weekend. This is not the first time this has happened. PCSO Mark Bell rang Ross Healthcare, who will be coming along to install fencing to protect the property.

A resident had voiced concerns about increasing levels of vandalism & theft in the village. It appears that there is CCTV footage of the perpetrators but that it is too grainy to identify them. The Council urged everyone to display increased vigilance.

19. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 12th September 2017 at 8pm.

Meeting closed at 9.55pm.

Signed.....
Chairman

Date.....