



MINUTES OF MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

At the Village Hall at 20:00 Thursday, October 12, 2023

Members Present

Chair	Jim Donahue
Vice-Chair	Diana Smith
Members	Nick Brazil Katherine Higley Debbie Leach Frances Parkes

Officers Present:

Clerk, RFO	Jane Yamamoto
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Public and Press: 2 residents

The meeting started at 20:00.

- 1 **Apologies for absence & Mission Statement** 20:00
Cllr O'Grady sent his 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. 20:05
- 4 **Chairman's Announcements** 20:10

Walled Garden Planning application – I attended SODC Planning Committee meeting on 11th October to present our objection. Despite us having what I felt was strong planning basis for having the Walled Garden planning application rejected, I am sorry to report that the SODC Planning Committee voted to approve the application, as recommended by the Planning Officer:

- I was able to get through the main points prepared by Cllr O'Grady in the 5 minute time allowed, except for the summary at the end.
- Another resident from the Mill House area also attended and gave an impassioned speech.
- The Planning Officer recommended approval stating the impact on the Conservation Area was neutral. He acknowledged that the new building would be much more visible from many angles, but felt it was offset by the improved architecture that was sympathetic to the area, compared to the existing building.

- Some councillors were sympathetic to our concerns with 3 of the 11 abstaining, and Cllr Dragonetti being the only councillor to object. 7 Councillors voted to approve the application. Their main arguments were:
 - The plot was large and the house was not disproportionate to the plot.
 - Whilst the third floor roof was visible over the wall, overlooking would not be possible from the rooms there which formed part of the dormer roof that only had velux windows.
 - Some felt that it was not out of keeping with the Conservation area which was a built up area with buildings of diverse architecture.
 - Some felt it would be successful in an appeal so best to approve it or approve it before a proposal for more than one house was developed.
- The councillors understood the concerns regarding the pond and flooding and understood that resolving this was a condition for development. Cllr O’Grady and I understood the condition to be related to the building of the house on the flood plain as opposed to the watercourse issue, but I intend to push this with their Drainage Engineer to ensure we get satisfaction on the pond being reinstated prior to any work on the house starting.

Fix My Street Super User - I have signed up to be a FixMyStreet Super User and have received training. The means:

- I can identify potholes in the village pavements or streets, outline them with white paint and have them actioned by OCC Highways within 28 days. If it is considered a safety issue I can request action within 2 hours.
- Qualifying potholes must be at least 4 cm deep and no more the 2 meter in length.
- Drains cleaning is no longer part of the Super User remit, but I have been put in touch with the area OCC Highways manager and will be able to discuss OCC work to address blocked drains.

I attended OCC Highways Open Day at their Depot in Drayton, led by OCC Highways leader Sean Rooney:

- This covered demonstrations on everything from pothole filling to road salting.
- I met the road inspection team who makes recommendations on road improvements where regular pothole filling may be insufficient and have their contact details for future reference.

I plan to take:

- Planning training on 17 October in Didcot. Cllr Smith also had this training.
- 26th October, meeting at Oxford County Hall - OALC, Oxfordshire County Council and the District and City Councils are working together to develop a Charter to support our partnership working with Town and Parish Councils. A Charter is a

commitment of principles to support successful partnership working and we want to hear your views on what future ways of working should look like.

Other activities:

- Hillside loose step – this is now repaired after I raised this to OCC. They agreed it was a safety related matter so expedited it.
- Whitchurch Hill bench - Still waiting for OCC Highways team to confirm that it is OK as it is on Highways verge land.
- Tibetan Cherry Tree – Jill Bradon has worked with the school to find a parent from the school to be the new guardian for the Cheery Tree on Eastfield Lane. The school had sent out a request in their newsletter.
- SSEN Community Emergency Grant – This has now been approved for the First Aid Training! We will liaise with the resident organising this to confirm the dates.

Eastfield House rebuilding – Work is progressing well. I have had feedback that the contractors are very conscientious of neighbours and keep the surrounding area generally clean, although are unavoidably a bit noisy during working hours. For any questions please contact Construction Contracts Manager, Nick Hall from J Guest nick.hall@jguest.co.uk, mobile: 07739 983003. Please also note that Urban Villages has changed its name to Zephyr X due to an internal company restructuring.

Progress as of early October:

- The bat licence works was completed in September.
- You can see that they installed improved secure fencing around the site perimeter.
- They have stripped the property including all asbestos with just the last small rear section of the building to be removed.
- They have re-surveyed the trees in consultation with SODC and are just finalising the revised landscape design for SODC approval based on changes to growth of trees since the original survey. Some trees in the original tree survey showed trees that are now mature and worth keeping being removed and trees that are now dead as remaining.

Plans for next quarter include:

- Concluding demolition of rear building
- Progression of the utility trenches and drainage tanks
- Repair work to the existing building
- Commencement of the groundworks

High Street Residents Parking and Pedestrian Safety Plan Consultation - OCC Highways have confirmed that consultation on the planned Residents Parking scheme and changes to parking restrictions on the High Street is due to start on the 20th of October.

- Consultation will last for four weeks finishing by the end of November.
- Documents will be published in January and the matter will probably go to the Cabinet Decisions Meeting at the end of January. Representatives of the PC can speak at the Meeting.

Cllr Higley reported that the Parish Council should receive the Conservation Area report by mid-November to January 2024 (this is subject to change by SODC). The Parish Council will have about two weeks to comment before it goes out for public consultation.

5 To approve minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council meeting of September 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/S3065/DIS

BP Technology Centre, Bozdown Drive, Whitchurch Hill RG8 7QR

Discharge of conditions 13 (Contaminated Land – Linked Conditions (1)) under application reference number P22/S3223/FUL (The demolition of buildings; the erection of a new part single storey, part two storey building for the research/testing of electric battery technology and associated test chambers; and the erection of buildings and compound for storage and other ancillary facilities).

Resolution: The Parish Council is not able to submit a comment for discharge notifications.

6.2 P23/S2869/HH

37 Manor Road, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EU

Proposed double storey side extension and single storey rear extension following demolition of existing side store and rear conservatory.

Resolution: The Parish Council voted to support this application.

6.3 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 window 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 Parish Council voted to support this application.

6.4 P23/S3372/LDE

Boathouse, Hardwick Road, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7RA

Seeking lawful development certificate for the use of the Boathouse as a residential dwelling.

Resolution: The Parish Council will review the plans in more detail.

7 To receive reports from the representatives of Oxfordshire County Council and South Oxfordshire District Council 20:35

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

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

8 **Finance:** 20:40

8.1 To approve the payment schedule for October:

Payment	Sub-total	VAT	Total
Staff expenditure			£506.80
ROSPA (Playground)	£85.50	£17.10	£102.60
Scofell (September)	£739.98	£148	£887.98
Scofell (Additional cuts)	£360.00	£72.00	£432.00
Community Heartbeat	£210.00	£44.50	£267.00
NASLG	£551.42		£551.42
Environment Agency	£178.28		£178.28
N. Macmillan (bench)	£250.00		£250.00

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the payments.

8.2 Receipts:

Receipts	Amount

8.3 Bank Reconciliations (September 2023) (Attachment 3, 4,5,6)

8.4 Motion to approve the Financial Regulations (Attachment 7)- Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Parkes

Resolution: The Parish Council voted to approve the Financial Regulations.

8.5 Motion to approve the Financial Risk Assessment (Attachment 8)– Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Parkes

Resolution: The Parish Council voted to approve the Financial Risk Assessment.

9.0 Motion that the Parish Council try to negotiate the reduction of any lease on the strip of land adjacent to the Popper Playground from 999 to 100 years along with an early exit clause to be used by a future Parish Council if necessary. The negotiation to be carried out by the Playground Working Group who should also establish the boundaries of the strip and those of Red Rose triangle with the landowner, using a drone photograph if feasible. When the boundaries are agreed, they should be registered with the Land Registry. Also that the Parish Council agree that in future, all playground equipment be sited or re-sited on land belonging to the Parish Council. - Cllr Smith seconded by Cllr Higley 20:50

9.1 **Resolution:** The Parish Council voted to approve the motion.

10.0 Motion to approve the placements of the Polish Church Garden Signs – Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Smith 20:55

10.1 John Bradon updated on the work done at the Polish Church Memorial Garden site. He praised Alexa and the rest of the residents that worked on this area. He has written the

- wording of the Interpretation Board and gathered photos with Anna, Sally and Alexa. They will ask for quotes for the signs and graphic designs.
- 10.2 It was suggested that 3 signs be placed in the village: on the railings in front of the Village Hall, at the end of the lane, and near the entrance to the Garden site. John Bradon will advise the residents of the locations prior to the signs going up.
Resolution: The Parish Council voted to approve the locations of the 3 signs.
- 11.0 Motion to purchase and erect Community Speedwatch signs at up to 5 locations around the village at a maximum cost of £495.00 (Attachment 9) – Cllr Parkes seconded by Cllr Smith 21:30
- 11.1 Cllr Parkes reported that the Speedwatch Group required more volunteers to carry out their surveys once a week. The police have sent out letters to offenders and advised that 92% do not re-offend.
- 11.2 Cllr Parkes outlined the plan for the Speedwatch signs. The proposed locations were as follows: entrances to the village at the bridge, coming down Whitchurch Hill and from Hardwick Road. Additional signs were proposed at the upper end of the High Street and lower end of lower narrows.
It was suggested that the 3 entrances to the village be approved and the Council could wait for the reaction of motorists as they did not want to change our village ANOB with too many signs.
Resolution: The Parish Council voted to approve 3 signs at the entrances to our village.
- 12 The Cricket Club have offered WOTPC the Tea Hut for demolition. Motion to agree to action this subject to approval of such costs, once they have received written consent from someone duly authorised by the Cricket Club to sign on the Cricket Club’s behalf – Cllr Parkes seconded by Cllr Donahue 21:40
- 12.1 Cllr Parkes outlined the background of the negotiations. Cllrs Parkes and Donahue had a discussion with a member of the Cricket Club. It became apparent that both sides were in agreement that the Tea Hut should be demolished so the Parish Council would be wasting its money seeking a legal agreement to take ownership for something that would then be immediately demolished. She was also seeking quotes to carry out the demolition of the Tea Hut.
She had asked SODC if the PC needed permission to do so. The Parish Council will wait for the responses from all.
Resolution: The Council approved the motion.
- 13 Review of Playground Inspection report (Attachment 10) 21:45
- 13.1 Cllr Higley outlined the report. There was nothing that indicated the closure of the playground or any high risk. Some issues had been resolved. e.g., gate and bin liner. Cllr Higley recommended that the playground inspection report to be placed on the website. Benches should be completed shortly. No Dogs Signs can also be ordered.
- 14 Hardwick Road Verge Restoration update 21:50
- 14.1 John Bradon outlined the background and update on the project. He said that quotes were slow to be obtained. He also announced that Mend The Gap had approved a £15k

grant. The group must work to the AONB procurement rules which requires at least two quotes.

- 14.2 The Jubilee footpath was also discussed and the Mend the Gap Programme Manager recommended that a handrail be installed. John would try to obtain a quote for this as well. The maintenance of these verges was also an issue to be discussed and decided.
- 15 Village Green Car Park repair update – Cllr Parkes 21:55
- 15.1 Cllr Parkes reminded Council of the quote of grasscrete for over £5k. Another quote in July with same supplier for concrete was £3,900. Another quote from a local builder in Pangbourne for a slab of concrete was £3,800.
- The Council would make a decision on a quote at the next meeting but in principle, agreed that using grasscrete was more appropriate and not much more expensive.
- 16 To review progress on any open actions from previous Parish Council meetings and agree any revision of actions on the action list.
- 17 To confirm the date and time of the next meetings is Thursday, November 9, 2023 at 20:00.
- 18 Confidential discussion for thank you notes from the Parish Council.
It was agreed to write a thank you to Brian Howes.
- 19 Meeting closed. 22:00

Attachment 1

**Report to Whitchurch Parish Council October 2023
Councillor Community Grants**

Another reminder that I have a budget for small scale community projects, such as provision of play equipment, improvements to community facilities, defibrillators etc. The current round of Community Grant scheme is due to close midday on 20 October 2023.

This year there is only ONE round of grant making, so applications are not made now there will not be another chance in this financial year.

Oak Taverns and The Greyhound

I was sorry to learn that there are a couple of problems with the licencing of the Street Food Service at the Greyhound. First, apparently the licence application has to confirm that the permission of all landowners has been given, and it appears that the County Council, as Highways Authority, owns some of the land of the application. The application as submitted did not confirm that the required permission had been given. Secondly, as the Greyhound is a listed building, planning consent is required. This latter issue applies to seven of the eight licencing applications that Oaks Taverns have made.

Neither of these problems are insuperable.

Many people get upset when things are done without planning permission, or compliance with other legislation. Such legislation is part of a well ordered society, where citizens are able to rely on the rights of individuals being protected through defining the responsibilities of other sections of society, in particular the responsibility of corporate bodies to observe legislation that is in place to protect the rights of all.

I look forward to street food being one again available at the Greyhound

Dentistry

Our Local Integrated Care Board (the latest manifestation of local health service government) took on responsibility for commissioning dental, optometry and pharmacy service last year. It is trying to address the well known problems of NHS dental care, and there is an NHS website to help you find where dental services are available, and also a website site **dentalchoices.org** which can help. Locally, the Morgan Clinic in Henley is noted as providing NHS dental services.

Check before you chuck

An estimated 3,340 tonnes* – the equivalent of just over 200 double decker buses – of items that residents put in their recycling bins during 2022/23 were not actually recyclable – that's 11 per cent of all the contents of our green bins for the whole year!

It can be very difficult to remove non-recyclable items out of the large loads of recycling in our collection trucks or at the recycling facility; and if it's food waste or other messy items then it could result in whole truckloads of recycling having to be rejected.

We all need an occasional reminder to ensure we get it right so, this autumn, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils will be placing stickers on all green household recycling bins to encourage people to 'Check it before you chuck it'.

The sticker features a QR code for people to scan to help them check, along with a reminder that all items in the green bin should be clean, dry and loose.

Even if the label says that something can be recycled, you should still check to make sure – recycling labels on packaging are often incorrect and we may not be able to recycle that item locally.

By ensuring you only put the correct items in your recycling bin, you will play your part in helping to keep us among the top recyclers in the country!

**To find out which bin an item should go in, please ‘Check it before you chuck it’
at southandvale.gov.uk/checkit**

Peter Dragonetti

Attachment 2

REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS OCTOBER 2023 FROM CLLR KEVIN BULMER

GENERAL OCC REPORT

DAMNING OFSTED/CQC REPORT ON CHILDREN'S SEND SERVICES

Oxfordshire's local area partnership (LAP) has apologised to families and committed to significant change to improve support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) following an inspection of services by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission in July. Inspectors identified that there are widespread systemic failings across the local area partnership leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, which must be urgently addressed. The LAP is made up of Oxfordshire County Council and NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) Integrated Care Board (ICB) who are jointly responsible for the planning and commissioning of services (across education, health and social care) for children and young people with SEND in Oxfordshire. The partnership also includes Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. Angry parents called for the OCC Cabinet Member for Children's Services to resign, but this has now been overtaken by events (see below). The Conservative Opposition has called a special meeting of Full Council to debate the issue. This will take place on October 13th.

COALITION RUNNING OCC COLLAPSES AND COUNCILLOR RESIGNS LABOUR WHIP

The Fair Deal Alliance of Liberal Democrats, Labour, and Green parties, which had run the council since 2021, was shattered in September when Labour pulled out of the coalition.

Following the turmoil, senior Labour figures have claimed there were difficulties from the very start of the coalition and that a 'long sequence of events' had shaken the party's faith in the alliance. The Oxford Mail has reported that Council leader Liz Leffman dismissed Labour's claims as "self-justifying nonsense" and said the party "could have broken the agreement at any stage" if it was uncomfortable with the alliance. The Mail added that in an email to Labour members on Tuesday, Cllr Michael O'Connor, the secretary of the Oxfordshire County Labour Group, explained the reasons for the party's dramatic departure. He said "Over the last two years, our efforts to transform services and improve outcomes for residents have been persistently watered down by the Liberal Democrats and the Green party. From day one, the Liberal Democrats have been plagued by infighting. Cllr Leffman has been repeatedly challenged from within her own party, resulting in weak and indecisive leadership. A lack of any political agenda means that council time has been prioritised for political posturing." County Councillor Damian Haywood has resigned from the Labour Party over the issue and will sit as an independent.

NEW CABINET

The Liberal Democrats and Greens have announced they will try and run the council as a minority administration. The make-up of the new Cabinet has yet to be announced.

OXFORD LTNS AFFECTING 'TEACHER RECRUITMENT' – REPORT

Oxford's low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) are among the factors making it difficult to recruit and retain teachers, a report has found. The Oxfordshire Education Commission said the scheme, along with other transport issues and the cost of living and housing, was "fuelling recruitment and retention issues in Oxfordshire." Teacher vacancies in the county are more than double the national average, according to Department for Education figures.

GOVERNMENT AWARDS OCC £250,000 FOR 'SMART STREET POSTS' SCHEME

The Government has awarded OCC £250,000 funding to test smart street posts that can house electric vehicle (EV) charging hubs, boost wireless coverage (including 5G), monitor air quality and display public information. The money is coming from the Government's Smart Infrastructure Pilots Programme (SIPP) and the amount awarded will be matched by the authority itself to create a total investment of £500,000.

EXTENDED TIMETABLE FOR CLOSURE OF OXFORD'S BOTLEY ROAD

Network Rail has informed OCC that it will no longer be able to reopen Oxford's Botley Road at the end of October 2023, as previously planned. Due to complications experienced during its £161 million redevelopment of Oxford Station, Network Rail has requested that Botley Road remain closed to through traffic until the project is completed in October 2024. The original plan was to reopen the road at the end of next month when utility diversion work was due to be completed, and then close it again to through traffic from March - October 2024 for highway work and the replacement of Botley railway bridge. However, Network Rail has not been able to keep to this schedule due to problems caused by the discovery of an inverted brick arch under the surface, which stretches beneath the railway bridge.

RELEASE OF £1.55M DEVELOPMENT FUNDS FOR EXPANDED ZERO EMISSION ZONE

At the Cabinet meeting on 19th September, Cabinet agreed to progress to the second phase of the expanded Oxford City Zero Emissions Zone Scheme project – detailed work needs to be undertaken to forecast the scheme’s potential benefits, impacts and scheme design. The approved budget for the development work £1.55m. The actual implementation of the scheme has been delayed by the Botley Road closure referred to above and there are calls from the Conservative Opposition to scrap the scheme, or at least put it on hold.

SECONDARY SCHOOL APPLICATION PROCESS OPENS IN OXFORDSHIRE

Parents and carers can now apply for their Year 6 child to attend a secondary school for September 2024. Applications should be submitted online by 31 October 2023 at

oxfordshire.gov.uk/secondaryadmissions

Parents and carers will be contacted with the result of their application on national offer day, 1 March 2024.

UPDATE ON RAAC IN A SMALL NUMBER OF ACADEMIES IN OXFORDSHIRE

OCC has confirmed that none of the schools it runs is affected by the current RAAC (Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete) issue that has been prominent in the national news. Only one Oxfordshire secondary school is a local authority maintained school and around half of primary schools in the county are now academies. These schools are therefore run independently of the council and managed by the Regional Schools Director/Department for Education. OCC has been kept informed by a small number of academies in the county who do have RAAC issues but who have each come up with arrangements to ensure that children continue to be educated.

OXFORD UNITED STADIUM BID TO PROCEED

Proposals for council-owned land to be leased to Oxford United FC to build a new stadium near Kidlington have been approved by Cabinet. The club now has to submit a planning application to Cherwell District Council.

UPDATE ON CABINET

Joining [existing members](#), including there new Deputy Leader, Councillor Pete Sudbury:

- **Councillor Kate Gregory:** Cabinet Member for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) improvement
- **Councillor John Howson:** Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People’s Services
- **Councillor Neil Fawcett:** Cabinet Member for Community and Corporate Services
- **Councillor Nathan Ley:** Cabinet Member for Public Health, Inequalities and Community Safety
- **Councillor Judy Roberts:** Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Development Strategy.

Councillor Calum Miller has decided to step down from the role of cabinet member for finance and will be replaced by **Councillor Dan Levy**