



MINUTES OF MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL
At the Village Hall at 20:00 Thursday, April 11, 2024

Members Present

Chair Jim Donahue

Members

Katherine Higley
Debbie Leach
Paul O'Grady
Frances Parkes

Officers Present:

Clerk, RFO Jane Yamamoto

Public and Press: 1 resident

The meeting started at 20:00.

1 **Apologies for absence & Mission Statement** 20:00

Cllrs Brazil and Smith sent their apologies. It was resolved to accept apologies for absence from Cllr Smith.

2 **Declaration of Interests**

Cllr Higley declared her interest in the planning application of the Technology Centres. Cllr Leach declared her interest for the grant of The Old Stables.

3 **Public Forum** – an opportunity for members of the public to express their point of view on any item on the agenda.

There were no members of the public wanting to make a comment.

4 **Chairman's Announcements** 20:05

Village Green – Thank you to Cllr Parkers for organising the successful demolition of the Tea Hut. There was very little disruption to the green itself. Apparently, no one was expecting there to be a concrete base to the tea hut which still remains.

Graffiti – Thanks to Cllr Parkes for removing graffiti from the Speedwatch sign at the entrance to Hardwick Road.

OCC Flooding grants: I have forwarded the grant applications to both the Flood Forum team and Oak Taverns:

- Oak Taverns has recently undertaken some extensive flood prevention improvements at the Greyhound and may wish to apply for a grant to reimburse them.
- The Flood Forums concerns are largely covered by the ongoing Section 19 request. Richard Wingfield has raised a FixMyStreet request to have the gullies along Whitchurch Hill cleared.

Muddy Lane Bollard replacement – The Green Team guardian for Muddy Lane has raised the issue that one of the wooden bollards at the bottom of Eastfield Lane appears to have been

removed. He has asked whether it should be replaced or not. He has been advised to check with the village contractor on when they need access to the lane for maintenance purposes. Cllr Smith may have another proposal that would need to be raised at a future meeting.

Residents Issues:

- Upper narrows safety: Cllrs Parkes, Leach and I met with 3 residents of homes in the upper narrows. There concerns were:
 - Traffic speeds seem to be getting faster recently in the upper narrows risking pedestrian safety including their children and pets.
 - Drivers aggressively competing to enter the narrows have scraped the brick walls in front of their homes and using anti-social beeping.
 - Solutions that we discussed following up on included:
 - Cllr Parkes to lend traffic cones to put in front of homes alerting them to take care of walls and entrances. **Action198:** TAPWG to investigate options for flashing lights at upper narrows to slow traffic and highlight concealed entrances.
 - TAPWG to investigate options for flashing lights above the entrance to upper narrows alerting drives to take care, slow down and be aware of concealed entrances.
 - The new parking scheme should help reduce congestion and increase visibility in the upper narrows.
 - Investigate options for a light in the narrows, perhaps batter operated with a timer or motion sensitive. **Action199:** Cllr Leach will review at lights for the upper narrows to reduce speeding.
- **Light still out in upper narrows**
 - Light at upper narrows (no. 7) – I am told is now finally working, bit now see a report that it stopped working as of 6th April?
 - The Ivy on the light near the Little House still has not been addressed.
- **Toll Bridge resurfacing under way.**
 - A resident asked if they will address blocked drains as part of this. I have been told that the Bridge company is clearing the first drain on the Pangbourne side but is not taking responsibility for the drain by the medical centre. This would need to be raised to Pangbourne PC and West Berks Council.
- **Hardwick Road paving stones have now been replaced** – This was raised by Richard Wingfield and myself as is now resolved.

5	To approve minutes of the meeting of March 14, 2024.	20:15
	Resolution: The Council voted to approve the minutes.	
6	Planning Applications – to discuss and agree Council’s response to the following:	20:20
6.1	P24/S0950/DIS Technology Centre Bozedown Drive Whitchurch Hill Reading RG8 7QR The application is for: Discharge of condition 17 (Archaeology Staged Programme of Investigation) on application 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 cannot submit comments on Discharge Conditions.	
6.2	P22/S0971/DIS Technology Centre Bozedown Drive Whitchurch Hill Reading Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7QR	

The application is for: Discharge of condition 13(Contaminated Land) on planning application 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 voted to contact SODC to confirm that they are following up on recommendations from the Contamination Report.

6.3 P24/S0988/FUL

Oakfield Eastfield Lane Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ

The application is for: Replacement dwelling including a swimming pool building with linking roof to the east of the replacement dwelling approved by P23/S4171/FUL, dwelling now proposed to be moved 3m to the west.

Resolution: The Parish Council voted to submit comments that they reiterate their submitted comments on January 11, 2024 for the previous application (P24/S4171/FUL) and would like the Tree Officer’s view on the latest application.

7 To receive reports from the representatives of Oxfordshire County Council and South Oxfordshire District Council 20:30

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

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

8 **Finance:** 20:35

8.1 To approve the payment schedule for April:

Payment	Sub-total	VAT	Total
Staff expenditure (April)			£541.80
Simon Campbell (benches)			£2,500.00 BACS
WDAS (Grant for post)			£500.00 BACS
SODC (dog bin Q4/23 Q1/24)	£793.11	£158.62	£951.73
Rialtas (annual support/software)	£192.00	£38.30	£230.40
Site Spider (annual hosting of website)	£61.10		£61.10
De Garden (Demolition of Tea Hut)	£3,000.00		£3,000.00

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the payments.

8.2 Receipts:

Receipts	Amount
SODC (first half of Precept 2024-25)	£14,082.00

8.3 Bank Reconciliations (March 2024)

9.0 Motion to grant a donation of £300 to the Friends of St. Mary’s and St. John’s for the acoustic cladding at The Old Stables -Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Smith 20:40

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

10.0 Motion for the Parish Council to use Herald Printing Services Limited on an interim basis now that Herald Graphics has ceased trading – Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Smith 20:45

10.1 Cllr Donahue explained that the son of the former company the Parish Council used has quoted for printing. Cllr Donahue said it was cheaper to provide a printer with a ‘print-ready design’ for the Bulletin and this could open up options by doing this ourselves. He will request quotes for a future issue of the Bulletin based on the experience with the new printer and once at least 3 suitable suppliers can be identified to bid on the work.

Resolution: The Parish Council voted to approve the use of Herald Printing Services Limited on an interim basis.

- 11.0 Apologies from Councillors to Clerk 20:55
- 11.1 The Clerk explained that if a Councillor missed all Parish Council meetings in a 6 month period, they would be automatically removed from their position on the Council. All Councillors needed to notify the Clerk with reasons for their absence. It would be noted on the Minutes of Meeting. The Council could only resolve to accept apologies if their reasons for absence were military or jury duty or a family crisis.
It was agreed that the Clerk update the Standing Orders to reflect the updates on recording apologies.
- 12 To review progress on any open actions from previous Parish Council meetings and agree any revision of actions on the action list.
- 13 To confirm the date and time of the next meetings is Thursday, May 23, 2024 at 20:00 and the Annual Parish Meeting will be on Thursday, May 30, 2024 at 19:30.
- 14 Confidential discussion for thank you notes from the Parish Council
- 15 Meeting closed. 22:00

Attachment 1

Report to Whitchurch on Thames Parish Council April 2024

Some council car park fees to change from April 1

New fees for car parks in South Oxfordshire are being introduced from April 1.

The car park fees are being simplified and rounded to the nearest whole pound while all car parks will continue to have a period of free parking. This means some of the fees are being reduced by up to 16 percent while other will see modest increases. Parking permits rates have also been frozen.

The additional parking income from the rises means we can match the cost of managing and running our car parks, otherwise we'd have to divert funding from other council services to subsidise car parking.

All funds from car parking fees and permits are invested back into providing the service and making improvements to car parks, highways, public conveniences and public open spaces, as well as developing infrastructure to encourage active travel – such as cycle paths and bike storage.

Parking for the first hour remains free in all Didcot, Thame and Henley public car parks.

There is a growing body of evidence that shows that while business owners believe that as cost increases, footfall decreases, in fact, the towns/cities with the highest footfall generally have higher than average parking charges. Furthermore, fair car park charges can help ensure that parking spaces frequently turn over, increasing overall footfall.

You can see the full fees on our parking policy webpage.

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/parking-roads-and-streets/parking/parking-policy/>

Henley Disability Open Day

Henley Leisure Centre is opening its doors to disabled residents on Sunday 21 April from 10am-2pm. There will be a range of FREE activities and sports modified for disabled residents and their families to have a go at something new.

Better, our leisure centre contractor, has partnered with Regatta for the Disabled. Henley Leisure Centre has accessible parking spaces, changing rooms and toilets.

Parents and carers of participants under 18 years are required to stay at the venue.

Included will be:

10:00 - 11:00 - Learning disability tennis/boccia/new age kurling

11:00 - 12:00 - Pan disability football

12:00 - 13:00 - Wheelchair rugby taster – open to all those with disabilities including neurodiverse conditions.

Wheelchairs provided. Family members are welcome to join in!

13:00 - 14:00 – swimming

Make use of the Henley leisure centre swimming pool inclusive of pool hoist for some lengths or family fun.

Any questions can be directed to Kate Mulrey at henley@gll.org

<https://www.better.org.uk/leisure-centre/south-oxfordshire/henley-leisure-centre/news/henley-disability-open-day>

Empty Homes Policy

The council's commitment to tackling our social housing waiting list and to making sure local families have somewhere to live has led to the approval of a new Empty Homes Policy.

The focus will be on working positively with the owners of empty homes to bring homes back into occupation, in particular for those in most need.

There are reasons why a property might be empty in the short-term but long-term empty properties are not a good use of a valuable resource and may have a negative impact on their local area.

The empty homes policy sets out the incentives available to home owners to bring homes back into use to the benefit of the owner, potential tenants, and the wider community.

Enforcement action will normally only be considered as a last resort when empty home owners are unwilling to engage and the property is causing problems for the community.

If you are the owner of an empty property and would like to discuss the incentives available to bring your property back into use, please email our private sector housing team at psh@southandvale.gov.uk

You can also email our private sector housing team at the address above to report any issues concerning empty homes in your area. Please provide us with both your details and the details of the property.

You can read the new policy here: <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/03/Empty-Homes-Policy.pdf>

Earn Extra Cash – Be a Polling Station Clerk!

We are still looking for people to work as poll clerks and presiding officers on Thursday 2 May for the Police and Crime Commissioner election.

Please do encourage residents to register their interest – they could earn up to £233 for a day's work and though tiring, it is fun and interesting to be at the coalface of the democratic process. Just search "poll clerks" on the SODC website.

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/local-democracy-and-elections/elections-and-voting/working-elections-2/>

Police and Crime Commissioner election

Many people don't realise the Police and Crime Commissioner even exists, others believe it shouldn't. The post is democratically elected and pays £86,700 a year. The job of the PCC is to make sure Thames Valley Police is an effective police force that delivers on the priorities of local residents.

A large chunk of your council tax goes to Thames Valley Police so do have your say in the PCC elections!

The election takes place on 2 May, full details on the SODC elections webpage.

- To vote in this election, you must be registered at your current address by 16 April - visit the national voter registration page - www.gov.uk/register-to-vote
- To vote at a polling station you must bring photo ID - a wide range of photo ID will be accepted, including passports, driving licences and cards with a PASS Mark.
- Anyone who doesn't have the accepted photo ID should apply NOW for a free voter ID document known as a Voter Authority Certificate. The deadline for this election is 5pm on 24 April – just visit the Electoral Commission website.

You can find out more here:

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/local-democracy-and-elections/elections-and-voting/current-and-upcoming-elections/pcc-election-2024/>

Fly tipping

I am sorry that the FixMy Street flytipping function is no longer available. There is a replacement app being developed for us, but its not yet available. In the meantime, please call Biffa on 03000 610 610 or email: admin.southoxford@biffa.co.uk with details of where you saw the waste, the type of waste and when you spotted it. There is a form you can fill in (if you like forms) on the fly tipping pages on the council's website.

Our Envirocrime team can then be dispatched to investigate. The council has a successful track record of prosecuting fly tippers so please do report!

The waste team very quick to pick up flytips, as it is well known that any tip attracts further tipping in the same spot.

Waste Satisfaction Survey

We are inviting residents to take part in our latest survey to tell us what they think of our waste services – that includes waste and recycling, food waste collections and street cleaning services.

<https://theconversation.southandvale.gov.uk/housing-and-environment/waste-survey-2024/>

The survey closes on 24 April, please do take a few minutes to share your views.

We're taking a snapshot of opinion on a regular basis to monitor how satisfaction levels change over time and identify areas for improvement – our most recent check-in was in the summer last year when we received over 2,000 responses – view the report here.

<https://www.southandvale.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Waste-Satisfaction-Survey-2023-Summary-Report.pdf>

Extra garden waste weeks

Residents who are subscribed to our brown bin service can put out extra garden waste on their normal brown bin collection day between 15 and 26 April.

Households can put out a maximum of four additional sacks of garden waste per brown bin subscription.

The extra waste must go in standard sized (60 litre) sacks and should only contain natural garden waste such as cut grass, plants or branches. It can also go in boxes or containers totalling no more than a standard bin full.

Residents are reminded not to leave out builders' waste bags as these won't be collected.

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

GENERAL OCC REPORT

CRACKDOWN ON ANTI-DRIVER ROAD SCHEMES AND BLANKET 20MPH LIMITS

On 17 March the Department for Transport published draft statutory guidance for councils on low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs), setting out that they must gain buy-in from local residents, businesses and emergency services when considering implementing new LTN schemes. Local authorities are expected to follow the guidance and ensure local people support their plans. Recent examples where councils have implemented these schemes without public support have been shown to cause disruption and have unintended negative consequences. If local authorities fail to deliver sensible road schemes that work for local people they could see future funding withdrawn, and under powers from the Traffic Management Act, the government could ultimately take control of an authority's roads where they are deemed to be widely mismanaged. Separately, councils have received strengthened guidance on setting 20mph speed limits, reminding them to reserve them for sensible and appropriate areas only – such as outside schools – and with safety and local support at the heart of the decision. Local authorities are expected to consider this guidance, and as with the LTN guidance, this could have implications for the awarding of funding in the future. Subsequently, the [Oxford Mail](#) reported that Andrew Gant, OCC cabinet member for Transport Management, claimed “detailed and lengthy” consultation went on before LTNs were implemented in Oxford and that they “form part of Oxfordshire County Council’s vision of a safer, cleaner, greener city and county for everyone”.

OXFORD ZERO EMISSION ZONE PILOT RAISES OVER £700,000 IN FIRST YEAR

OCC has announced that the Oxford city Zero Emissions Zone pilot generated £702,940 income from charges and fines over its first full financial year of operation. Critics have labelled this ‘pay to pollute’ scheme a policy failure but a financial success. The forthcoming Expanded Zero Emissions Zone is projected to generate £25m over a five-year period.

WORKPLACE PARKING TAX

The Liberal Democrat administration is planning to introduce a tax of £600 per parking space on all organisations with more than ten parking spaces in the city of Oxford. In addition to businesses, schools and other public organisations are likely to be hard hit. This matter is back in the news as BMW has controversially been exempted from the tax as it is just outside the Oxford ring road

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cd14mrk2yn3o>

WALKING AND CYCLING IN COUNTY TO GET £2.4M ACTIVE TRAVEL INVESTMENT

Oxfordshire is to benefit from £2.384 million awarded by Active Travel England – the UK government agency responsible for making walking, wheeling and cycling the preferred choice for everyone to get around in England. The funding has been awarded as part of the fourth phase of the [active travel bidding](#) process (active travel tranche 4). Oxfordshire County Council has previously been awarded grants of £600,000 from phase one, £2.98m from phase two and £10.4m from phase three. As with previous active travel awards, the money is to be invested in supporting specific projects intended to improve walking and cycling infrastructure in the county.

LATE NIGHT OPENING AT RECYCLING CENTRES TO END

A reminder that Oxfordshire’s household waste recycling centres (HWRCs) will no longer stay open late nights on Thursdays. The seven centres, operated by OCC, had previously opened until 8pm every Thursday between April and September. However, the extra service is being discontinued this year. Green Councillor Pete Sudbury, Deputy Leader of OCC with Responsibility for Climate Change, Environment and Future Generations, commenting in the [OCC press release](#), said: “We realise this decision will disappoint some people...”

PLANS TO SPEND £2.23M EXPANDING SEND SCHOOL IN OXFORD APPROVED

Funding to expand a school that caters for children from Oxfordshire with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) has been approved by the county council's cabinet.

A total of £2.23 million was approved by councillors at the 19 March meeting of cabinet to create 23 new places at Mabel Prichard Special School in Oxford. The school provides education and support for pupils with a range of severe learning difficulties and is managed by The Gallery Trust. The school is co-located with Orchard Meadow Primary School. It is also an academy and is managed by United Learning. It is proposed that Orchard Meadow Primary School will relocate its foundation stage accommodation into surplus space elsewhere on site, enabling the provision of the additional school places for children with SEND.

OXFORDSHIRE AWARDED £3.6M TO TRIPLE PUBLIC ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

Oxfordshire will receive £3.6 million to triple its number of public electric vehicle (EV) chargers after the county's Local EV Infrastructure (LEVI) bid was approved. Money from the [Department for Transport](#) will seed fund a major rollout of infrastructure worth over £10m that will see more than 1,300 public chargers delivered in the county by the end of 2025. The rest of the funding will largely come in the form of investment from the EV chargepoint operators themselves.

OCC led the application in close collaboration with Oxford City Council and Cherwell, West Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils. The programme aims to create a reliable, easy-to-use, contactless EV charging network spanning the county. This will give more people the opportunity to switch to an EV – regardless of where they live or their parking situation.

OVERSEAS CARE RECRUITMENT

Care providers across the south-east of England are being offered access to a new, Oxfordshire designed, [international recruitment system](#), helping to reduce bureaucracy and costs when hiring staff from abroad. Following a £2.54 million investment from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), OCC's innovation service has developed the initiative, which includes the creation of a portal for care providers. The portal offers support around complex areas such as immigration and compliance. The service has worked with care providers to better understand the challenges faced in overseas recruitment. The county council has now announced it will partner with Borderless, a technology company founded in 2022, to deliver and further develop the migration platform.

HOUSING PROGRAMME THAT SUPPORTS ADULTS WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Four adults with learning disabilities and autism are celebrating receiving the keys to their newly developed, specially adapted home in Witney. OCC has invested £5 million into the Resonance Supported Homes Fund that has bought and refurbished the property, in partnership with housing provider, Golden Lane Housing. The home is the first of five properties planned for Oxfordshire, providing person-centred housing for adults with additional needs, with four more due to open in Banbury, Bicester, Kidlington and Horspath later this year.

An Ancient Roman Villa Turns Up in a Dig in Grove

On a lighter note, Archaeologists in the U.K. have made a groundbreaking discovery at the Brookside Meadows site in Grove, a village in Oxfordshire north of Wantage. Amid a housing development by Barratt and David Wilson Homes, they have uncovered a remarkable Roman villa complex, shedding light on centuries of human activity in the area.

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