

Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council

MINUTES of the Parish Council meeting held in ‘The Old Stables’, Tuesday 12th December 2017, commencing at 8.00pm.

PRESENT

Chairman	Keith Brooks
Vice-Chairman	Jim Donahue
Councillors	Sarah Hanfrey Rachel Hatcher Denise Huxtable
Clerk	Felipa House

Public:
Iain Tolhurst.

1. Apologies for absence

Cllrs. Dave Bowen & Carrie Leadbeater-Hart, Cllr. Simister & Cllr. Bulmer. Cllr. Leadbeater-Hart is taking a leave of absence until February due to work commitments but continues to be included in all Council correspondence.

2. Declarations of interest

Cllr. Leadbeater-Hart mentioned by email that she could not comment on planning application P17/S3578/HH, Prospect House, High Street, as she had prepared the flood risk assessment.

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.

Iain Tolhurst brought along the plans he has recently submitted to SODC for pre-application advice. He wants to rebuild the vegetable shed at the junction of Hardwick Road & Path Hill in order to hopefully double sales in the next few years. The new shed would be twice the size of the current shed & constructed of wood with a green roof. It would be set further back from the road with a proper parking area in front for potentially 15 cars; this he hopes will encourage people to park there rather than on the road/verges. There would be a separate entrance & exit, so a new, extra gate would be installed. He would also install a community noticeboard, as well as a bike rack, & provide incentives for those who travel there by bike. The neighbours are happy with the proposed plans. SODC have been supportive but there may be issues with Highways, so Iain will be cutting back some unwanted shrubbery at the entrance to provide better sightlines for those exiting. (This could also help with the extension of the footpath along Hardwick Road). He is also predicting that there will be an increase in vehicles visiting the site, possibly by as much as 20%, based on 200 vehicles per week travelling along this section of Hardwick Road. The Clerk will forward Mark Francis’ details to Iain & to Cllr. Hatcher; he is an OCC Senior Traffic Technician Highways person & has been very helpful to the Council. Iain also suggested that soil from the building work could be used to help restore the verges along that end of Hardwick Road. It was suggested that he speak to Sally Woolhouse about this. He is applying for a LEADER grant so is hoping to have the application granted as quickly as possible so that the shed can be erected in the spring.

4. Agree minutes of Parish Council meetings 10th October & 14th November 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 was not present but had circulated his report before the meeting. This included information about a Housing and Growth Agreement with the Government for additional investment to support growth, economic development & housing across the county, the bids to the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund, the Ox-Cam Expressway, social care in Oxfordshire & recruitment, OCC's anti-scams campaign 'Take a stand against scams' & smoke alarm testing reminders.

7. Planning

P17/S3901/HH, Avoca Farm, Hartslock Bridleway. Erection of new single-storey building to house a rehearsal & editing suite. The Council voted unanimously to submit 'No strong views'.

P17/S3578/HH, Prospect House, High Street. Replacement of existing garage with new double-height oak-framed garage. The proposed new structure is very large & the councillors expressed reservations at not only its size but increase in height. They felt that it would be overdevelopment in the conservation area & not in keeping with its character, thereby potentially diminishing the value & meaning of the conservation area. However, if it were to be set back from the road then its size might perhaps be mitigated, but it was difficult to ascertain this accurately from the plans. The Council asked the Clerk to request an extension for this application to next month's meeting so that further enquiries can be made.

P17/S4180/LB, 4 Whitchurch House, High Street. Rebuild slate roof. The Council voted unanimously to submit 'No strong views'.

The planning application for the new village pavilion has just been submitted & details sent to the website. Following feedback from the village its location has been amended slightly to make it less prominent on the field. It was mentioned that use of it by village groups may not be as simple as first thought dependent upon funding received & safeguarding concerns.

8. Finance Approve payments/note receipts

Monthly salary for the Clerk

Keith Brooks expenses for paint (£23.51)

Payment to Jacksons Fencing for new Muddy Lane gate (£259.80)

Payment to Proturf for MOWS cobbles & membrane for area outside church drive (£284.60).

The Clerk has prepared a mandate variation form to amend access to the Council's bank account. This was duly signed by all concerned & will be actioned by the Clerk.

9. Village green

Cllr. Hanfrey is dealing with queries from a local resident regarding this year's grass cutting.

10. Village green working group/pavilion

There was no further update bar the planning discussion in section 7.

11. TAPAG (Traffic and Parking Action Group)

TAPAG had another meeting, at which a traffic survey was prioritised. Residents' parking is also being investigated. TAPAG are requesting current & historical statistics from the bridge company to see whether this may have had an effect on the parking situation.

12. Village hall refurbishment project

Progress has been good, with the formation of the new village plan working group. Cllr. Brooks has obtained a quote of about £6,000 for replacing the windows & back door with uPVC double glazing. The group is talking to users & attempting to list priorities & cost them.

13. Village environment/maintenance

A quote of about £600 has been received for 2 new village signs. This will be added to the agenda for January's meeting. The Clerk is still awaiting permission from SODC regarding the installation of a new fence at the Polish church site. She will chase again. Another quote is required, which Cllr. Brooks will obtain.

14. Village Plan

No additional information was given.

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

None were mentioned.

16. 2018/19 budget setting

There have been some issues regarding village maintenance this year. After some discussion, & following feedback from the village, the Council agreed to extend the length of the contract by one month to run from March to November in 2018. Some areas will also receive extra cuts next year & the village green should probably be kept shorter for longer, particularly around the outside. The Clerk will amend the contract to reflect this. The Clerk will make the grass-cutting schedule public & include the cost of each cut so that villagers know how their money is being spent.

The Clerk had circulated the Council's current financial position to the Council before the meeting. Cllr. Hatcher felt that employing a traffic consultant to help analyse the impact of all the proposed changes that have been suggested by the village would be extremely beneficial. It would probably cost in the region of £2-3,000; she will confirm. It is hoped this could be done in the current financial year. The Council unanimously agreed this spend as it was felt this could really help with the village's most pressing issues.

Cllr. Donahue will work with Iain Tolhurst & WoTHabs regarding the Hardwick Road verge project.

The Clerk has calculated the 2018/19 precept according to the SODC formula, & this amounts to £25,975. This is an increase of £202 over the current year. All councillors voted to submit this figure. The Clerk will complete the relevant forms & submit to SODC.

Action for Pangbourne Toilets had requested a further grant from the Council for the new financial year. The Council voted unanimously to donate a further £750. This will be reviewed on an annual basis.

The grant to the village hall will remain at £1,000 for the next financial year.

Council funds are earmarked each year for specific purposes & the Clerk had asked all councillors to determine areas of spend for the next financial year. After much discussion it was finally agreed that £10,000 be earmarked for village hall improvements, £5,000 for the village plan & its subsequent outcomes, £15,000 for short-term traffic improvements & £20,000 for costs associated with the new village pavilion.

17. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 9th January 2018 at 8pm.

Meeting closed at 10.40pm.

Signed.....
Chairman

Date.....