



MINUTES OF MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL
At the Village Hall at 20:00 Thursday, January 12, 2023

Members Present

Chair	Jim Donahue
Vice-Chair	Diana Smith
Members	Nick Brazil Katherine Higley Paul O'Grady Frances Parkes

Officers Present:

Clerk, RFO	Jane Yamamoto
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Public and Press:	Cllr Dragonetti
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The meeting started at 20:00.

- 1 **Apologies for absence & Mission Statement** 20:00
There were no 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.
There were no members of the public that wanted to express an opinion.
- 4 **Chairman's Announcements**
We received a letter of thanks from King Charles addressed to "The Residents of Whitchurch-on-Thames and Members of the Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council." The thank you note was in response to the letter of condolence I sent to the new King's private secretary, that notified him of the village's Book of Condolences that will be archived at St Mary's Church.
- 5 To approve minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council meeting of December 8, 2022.
Resolution: The Council voted to approve the minutes.
- 6 Planning Applications – to discuss and agree Council's response to the following: 20:05
 - 6.1 P22/S4285/HH
19 Swanston Field, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HP
Detached garden room/outbuilding
Resolution: The Council voted to object on the basis that the size and scale of the outbuilding is like a separate dwelling.
 - 6.2 P22/S4522/HH
Walliscote Farm, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EP
This is an amended design to the approved application P20/S1721/HH (Single Storey glazed link extension to connect the Farmhouse & Fowl house. Alterations to glazing size and position in the Fowl House together with the addition of 2x conservation style roof lights in the Fowl house) – without the infill extension to the farmhouse.
Resolution: The Council voted to support this application.

6.3 P22/S4281/FUL
Chalkhills, Hardwick Road, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7QS
Change of use and conversion of storage area into residential and installation of solar panels to roof.

Resolution: The Council reported to support this application.

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

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

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

8 **Finance:** 20:25

8.1 To approve the payment schedule for January:

Payment	Amount
Staff expenditure	£506.80
Scofell (Polish Church site with deduction of 2 cuts)	£480 BACS
THP Solicitors for deposit	£200 BACS
Kingdom Signs (VG Sign and install)	£1,102.37 BACS
Ashampoo licence (PDF)	£13.93 DD

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the payments for January.

8.2

Receipts	Amount
SODC (District Councillor Grant for restoration of Ruth Popper playground benches)	£2,500 BACS
Dunbar (Bootcamp use of Village Green during September, October and November 2022)	£80 BACS

8.3 Bank Reconciliation for December 2022

8.4 Quarterly Financial Review– Clerk (Attachment 3)

9 Motion to approve the Safeguarding Policy for 2023 Clerk seconded by Chair (Attachment 4)

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the Motion.

10 Motion to approve the creation of a Playground Working Group pending the approval of the Terms of Reference – Cllr O’Grady seconded by Cllr Leadbeater-Hart 20:30

10.1 Cllr Donahue said that there were standard Terms of Reference that could be used as a draft. Cllr Smith advised that the ToR should be approved first for the members of the group to review.

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the Motion pending review of the Terms of Reference when they are available.

11 Motion to decide, for the purposes of the OCC Consultation, the use of the proposed four areas of parking bays and also the times when parking will be allowed on the proposed single yellow line on the west side of the High Street. 20:35

Each area of parking bays- Permit holders only or shared used, e.g., non-permit holders for 2 hours and no return within an hour.

Single yellow line- No parking on either Monday-Friday or Monday-Saturday from 8 am-5 pm or 8 am – 6 pm. Cllr Smith seconded by Cllr Parkes

11.1 Cllr Smith explained that OCC needed a first plan to implement before the consultation took place. Cllr Parkes also reminded that after one year, it would all be reviewed. The Council recommended that the top bay outside Primrose House for 3 cars be residential only (permit holders only). Hill Cottages would be left as is. The Council recommended that the 2 spaces outside Whitchurch House be residential only (permit holders only). It was discussed the bottom bay be residential only while the middle bay be shared use. Shared use would be for only 2 hours and no return. Single yellow lines would provide additional parking outside the restricted hours which the Council agreed should be 8am – 5pm Monday – Friday. Cllrs Donahue and Dragonetti said that OCC had contract parking enforcers, funded by permit fees and fines. Cllr Parkes added that in Pangbourne there was not a lot of abuse of the shared use 2 hour bays and that the restriction of hours would help ease the traffic flow and sightlines during rush hours.

11.2 Cllr Smith outlined the terms provided by OCC:
-£100/permit and 2 limit /household;
-Each permit holder can apply for visitors permits. 25 free/year and another 25 for £1/each; only High Street residents living in eligible properties can apply for visitors permits;
- We understand that those over 70s receive free visitors permits
-Blue badge holders do not have to apply for any permits
It was noted that these terms were not in the Parish Council's remit to reduce the costs or negotiate the number of permits etc. Residents can raise any issues with OCC at the consultation stage.

11.3 Cllrs Donahue, Parkes and Smith reported that the owners of the pub were reasonably happy with the initial recommendations of restrictions being active Monday – Friday 8am – 5pm as this would not impact on their evening/weekend business. They still want to ensure there is enough space for the food trucks.

11.3 **Resolution:** The Council voted to approve the Motion to pass onto OCC for implementation detailed below:

- 3 of the banks of parking bays would be solely dedicated to residents of the village, including the two banks closest to the upper and lower narrows.
- 1 bank of 7 car parking bays (second bank north of the lower narrows) would allow parking for up to 2 hours for those without parking permits, whether they are from the village or not.
- Parking at single yellow lines would be restricted from Mondays to Fridays 8am to 5pm. Parking will be allowed at single yellow lines on weekends and other times.

12 Report of Playground Survey – Cllrs Leadbeater-Hart and O'Grady (Attachment 5) 21:00

12.1 Cllr O'Grady reported that there was a great level of response to the survey both online and paper. He outlined the highlights of the survey.

12.2 A councillor said that they were disappointed that the survey did not take into account the detailed report that two councillors did from the inspection reports. Two councillors disagreed with the way in which the online survey was carried out. If a resident wanted no changes, the survey stopped and they could not continue on to rate the equipment. Also, that there was no way for the survey to weigh a preference for the views of children in the village.

Cllrs Leadbeater-Hart and O'Grady advised that the survey had been approved by the Council before it was sent out.

All agreed that it was wonderful that the playground was mostly appreciated for its greenness.

12.3 It was agreed that the Working Group would take these above considerations into account and how the equipment was rated. The WG would also need to identify any constraints e.g., planning permissions required.

12.4 Cllr Smith recommended that a playground report for the Bulletin be written. It could include that an inspection was carried out annually, a grant had been received for the restoration of the benches, and a thank you to all for taking part in the survey.

13 King's Coronation Celebration – Clerk and Chair 21:15

13.1 The Clerk advised that a plan had started to celebrate the Coronation of the King in May. It was agreed that Monday, May 8th would be the best day to have an event on the Village Green. The Clerk had secured 2 marquees for £400 and the Chair would confirm The Roy Bailey Big Band or another village band for the day.

14 To review progress on any open actions from previous Parish Council meetings and agree any revision of actions on the action list.

14.1 Cllr Higley updated that the Manor Road tree work will commence next Monday, January 16 and Tuesday, January 17, 2023. Access will be as usual and she would place a notice on the website.

15 To confirm the date and time of the next meeting on Thursday, February 9, 2023 at 20:00. 21:20

16 Confidential discussion for thank you notes from the Parish Council.

A thank you note to the Editor of the Bulletin, Richard Williams, was approved.

17 Meeting closed. 21:30

Revised CIL Charging Schedule

The Council has formally adopted its revised **Community Infrastructure Levy** (CIL) Charging Schedule, which will come into effect on 3 January 2023. The updated schedule will increase significantly the amount of CIL developers are required to pay on new development and introduces a levy for developments including student housing, build to rent housing and elderly person's accommodation which are currently exempt from charges. The latter is particularly relevant in our District where Retirement Complexes, such as a recent one in Shiplake, can escape CIL

The revised **Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document** (SPD) will also come into effect on 3 January to support the updated CIL Charging Schedule and provide further guidance on how the Council will secure developer contributions through section 106 agreements. If you'd like any further information, please contact the Planning Policy Team on 01235 422600 or email planning.policy@southandvale.gov.uk

National Planning Policy Framework

A Government consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) commenced just prior to Christmas on 22nd December 2022, and is open for comment until 2nd March 2023. The consultation document sets out specific changes that the Government proposes to make to the NPPF to support its wider objectives which are stated as including to make the planning system 'work better for communities'.

The majority of proposed changes are focused upon matters of housing supply and delivery, including the often vexed issue of 5-year housing land supply.

The NPPF is supposed to guide planning decisions, but surprisingly that guidance only carries statutory weight if it is in the Local Plans

Like so many of these matters, it is a complete jungle of confusing and often contradictory positions and guidance, in which only Planning Consultants, Developers and their Planning lawyers can flourish. It is good that organisations like CPRE can respond to consultations of this nature.

According to the consultation document, a 'fuller review' of the NPPF will be undertaken in due course.

CCTV

Not an issue in this ward, but CCTV installations in Didcot, Henley, Thame and Wallingford supported 363 incidents, gave 47 evidence packs for potential court proceedings and supported 42 arrests over the last six months.

Peter Dragonetti

GENERAL OCC REPORT

CLIMATE LOCKDOWN

Conspiracy theorists have cunningly linked OCC plans to create '15-minute neighbourhoods' with the plans to introduce six traffic filters that will divide the city of Oxford.

- An example is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkZDcVFIxRI>
- And the OCC rebuttal is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8Dn8MWpv-U>
- Regrettably, the fake messaging has frequently been believed and has resulted in threats to councillors and staff: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-64001776>

THE TRUTH: NO LOCKDOWN BUT FILTERS TO SPLIT OXFORD INTO FOUR SECTORS

The truth behind the 'Climate Lockdown' scare is that OCC plans to spend £6.5m on traffic filters that will split Oxford into four sectors: North, South, West and East. When the traffic filters are operating, for cars without a permit, movement within each sector is unrestricted, but direct movement between sectors is not possible and requires use of the ring road. Affected motorists will face much longer journey times and distances. The intention is to force a change in behaviour. At the Cabinet meeting on 29th November 2022, a record number of individuals and organisations spoke passionately for and against the highly controversial proposal. The meeting was attended by police armed with tasers and security guards. The chamber had to be cleared at one point. The proposal was approved by Cabinet. The Conservative Opposition has grave concerns about the proposal but condemns the misinformation that is being spread and the resultant abuse suffered by councillors and employees. Many supporters of these measures now concede that they have been poorly planned, maximising the damaging effects of Low-Traffic Neighbourhoods, bus gates and Botley Road improvements works to motorists and businesses in Oxford.

COUNCIL BUDGET FOR 23/24

The Budget process is nearing conclusion, and it is likely the administration will impose a 5% increase in Council Tax on residents. In terms of proposed Directorate spend, a staggering 71% will go on Social Care (Adults £221.3m, Children's £164.9m, total Directorate £544m). As a proportion of gross expenditure (excluding schools) it will be around 52% of c£750m. By way of comparison Highways & Transport will get just 8%.

CHILDREN SERVICES CURRENTLY £14.5M OVER BUDGET OF £149.1M

The Children's Services budget for 22/23 is £149.1M. As of October 2022, the latest forecast actual spend is £163.M – an overspend of £14.5M. While there is no question that vulnerable children must be protected, the individual costs are staggering. A typical mainstream residential placement is £5,100 per child per week. Costs for children who need significant support can be as high as £20,000 per child per week – pro-rata that is £1m per child per year. Conservatives are questioning whether best value is being achieved and what action is being taken to bring down these extraordinary costs. Despite such questions over value for money, the Council is consulting on a budget that would see Council Tax increase to pay for an 8.3% cash rise in Children's Services spending.

OCC APPOINTS NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE ON £225,000 PA



Dr Martin Reeves has been named as the new Chief Executive of OCC. Dr Reeves is expected to take over from Interim Chief Executive, Stephen Chandler, in the Spring. The move means the Council will have been without a permanent Chief Executive for over a year, following Mr Chandler’s engagement as an Interim in February 2022, when the process of ending the partnership between OCC and Cherwell District Council began. Dr Reeves joins from Coventry City Council where he has been Chief Executive since 2009. From 2008 - 2009 he was Chief Executive of Bedfordshire County Council, after serving as Assistant Chief Executive there from 2006 - 2008. He will be paid a salary of £225,000 pa. Not only do Conservatives question whether Town Hall chiefs should be paid such salaries but they also continue to raise the issue of the lack of urgency surrounding the recruitment of a permanent Chief Executive.

CAR PARK ‘LIVING WALL’ THAT COST COUNCIL-TAX PAYERS £30,000 NOW REMOVED

The strange structure that appeared in the car park in front of County Hall during August, taking up two valuable car parking spaces intended for visitors on county business, has now been removed. Apparently, it was a ‘living wall’ and the aim was to understand the impact of plants on air quality in the car park. The cost of this five-month project to Council Tax payers was £30,000.



OCC RESOLVES TO IMPROVE SERVICE FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

At the 13 December Full Council meeting, the council acknowledged the difficulties experienced by certain parents and students in the delivery of its SEND service and paid tribute to the testimonies of parents heard at Full Council on 1 November 2022. Councillor Eddie Reeves, Leader of the Opposition, said: *“This is an issue of national and indeed grave concern and Oxfordshire does not compare that favourably to other counties and certainly not to other comparable local authorities – we are letting parents, pupils and professionals down if we don’t acknowledge that. We have over 5,000 children and young people with educational health plans in this county – that has grown of a quarter in the past three years. We must ensure that assessments are undertaken promptly and we must ensure that recommendations are subsequently acted upon promptly.”*

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WHITCHURCH PLAYGROUND RESPONSE SUMMARY

SUMMARY RESULTS

- 78 responses
 - 46 parents
 - 16 grandparents
 - 6 children
 - 10 other
- General score of 6.7/10
- 58% respondents want to see the playground changed
- A generational divide:
 - 70% parents want to see change
 - Only 44% grandparents want to see change
- Usage shows respondents may use it more if it was improved:
 - Only 47% of respondents who use it every week wanted change, but
 - 73% of monthly or occasional users want to see change

DETAILED COMMENTS

POSITIVE ASPECTS (by number of mentions)

Breadth of equipment	33
Trees	14
Shade	13
Location	14
Grass	10

The green aspect and open nature of the playground are highly appreciated, in particular the trees and the shade they bring. There were some comments about tree maintenance and not placing equipment below trees. The breadth of equipment for a small playground was mentioned most.

NEGATIVE ASPECTS (by number of mentions)

State/age of equipment	37
Maintenance	18
Flooring	15
Variety of equipment	10
Safety	11
Equipment for small children	9
Seating	9
Uninspiring	4
Accessibility	4

The poor state of the equipment was a common theme, coupled with general maintenance and the state of the flooring. Some feel there is not enough variety of equipment and that the age range of what is there is restrictive – this was particularly true for much younger children. Safety was a concern for some and

seating was mentioned by a significant number both in terms of the state of repair of existing seating but also a general lack of enough places to sit, together with suggestions for some picnic benches. A few people mentioned the lack of equipment for disabled children.

EQUIPMENT

Tall slide	7.3
Swings	6.7
Multiplay	5.8
Climbing frame	5.7
Spring riders	5.5
Toddler multiplay	4.6

The tall slide is by far the most popular piece of equipment and respondents are generally happy with the swings. The toddler multiplay scored poorly.

The climbing frame divided opinion with much more extreme answers than other pieces of equipment - respondents generally seem to either love it or hate it. As seen below, the most popular request for new equipment was for a better multiplay/obstacle course/climbing equipment for a range of ages.-

SUGGESTIONS FOR OTHER EQUIPMENT

Better climbing/multiplay	15
Tyre swing/obstacle course	4
Zipwire	4
Roundabout	3
Tunnel slide	2
Balance beam	2
Small playhut	2
See-saw	2
Basket swing	2
Climbing dome	2
Outdoor table tennis / ground trampoline / treehouse / skatepark / disabled access swing	1

Suggestions were particularly centred around a better multiplay/climbing equipment/obstacle courses. A zipwire was also mentioned a few times, as was a roundabout and see-saw. A few respondents suggested some interactive extras and problem-solving stations.

A number of people stated a preference for equipment in natural materials, in particular given the green setting.

Pangbourne and Checkendon were cited most often as examples of good local playgrounds. Crowmarsh Gifford, Streatley, Benson, Moulsoford and South Stoke were also mentioned favourably by respondents.

OTHER

There were various comments around the need for sustainable practices, as well as some concerns in the current economic context to be contemplating significant expenditure on the playground.