



## MINUTES OF MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

At the Village Hall at 20:00 Thursday, July 11, 2024

### Members Present

Chair Jim Donahue

### Members

Katherine Higley  
Debbie Leach  
Frances Parkes

### Officers Present:

Clerk, RFO Jane Yamamoto

**Public and Press:** 2 residents

The meeting started at 20:00.

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

Cllrs Brazil, O'Grady and Smith sent their apologies.

2 **Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interests.

3 **Public Forum** – an opportunity for members of the public to express their point of view on any 20:15

item on the agenda.

There were no members of the Public wishing to make a comment.

4 **Chairman's Announcements**

Swan Marker visit to school – In response to a recent attack on a gosling on the Pangbourne Meadow, I have had a discussion with the office of the Royal Swan Maker and they are happy to have him visit a local school sometime during the next term to discuss the health and ecosystems of swans and address any questions. It is too late for next week's Swan Upping. They plan to visit Woodcote Primary school next week during the Swan Upping.

Cllr Parkes and I have a meeting planned with OCC Highways engagement team to discuss a number of areas that need to be addressed in the Village including drains clearing on the High Street and Whitchurch Hill, speeding in the upper narrows, danger of the toll bridge access road, and road improvements on various roads in the village.

The Flood Forum team have reviewed the recently issued draft Oxfordshire County Council Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and found it to be suitable to meet the needs of the village. They say there is no need for any comments from the Parish Council.

Related to this, Cllr Smith had a meeting with Thames Water to discuss repairs to the sewage pumping station on Eastfield Lane. Geoff Weir to issue a more detailed report of the meeting shortly. Thames Water says that he pumps on Eastfield Lane are old and so parts harder to source so it is highly likely that they will go onto a list to be replaced. The Technical Co-ordinator will revisit in the Autumn when the water table is rising (perhaps given the present deluge we will

need him sooner!) to test if the ground water is getting into the sewers through mendable cracks. Residents should check that they have proper soakaways to help keep the gutter water from entering the sewers immediately contact Thames Water if they notice that lavatories are not flushing properly; if water is rising too far in the pan after flushing. If a number of people are contacting they know that there is a problem and can come out quickly.

**Residents Issues:**

1. Two residents have raised concerns about the overgrown nature of the Polish Memorial Gardens. Jane and I are encouraging the residents to discuss the matter with the Green Team Guardians to try to agree a way forward. The initial feedback from the Green team is that they are following to agreed maintenance plan that is modelled on the plan used for the Maze to encourage biodiversity in the open space, however they acknowledge that there has been unusually high growth of hay meadows in the this year. The annual cut is due to happen in Aug/Sep timeframe.

5 To approve minutes of the meeting of June 13, 2024 for the Annual Parish Assembly and the Parish Council. 20:10

**Resolution:** The Council voted to approve the minutes.

6 Planning Applications – to discuss and agree Council’s response to the following: 20:15

6.1 There were no planning applications.

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

7.1 SODC District Councillor Report (Attachment 1)

7.2

8 **Finance:** 20:20

8.1 To approve the payment schedule for July:

Payment	Sub-total	VAT	Total
Staff expenditure (July)			£541.80
Chairman’s expenses (APA)			£32.55
ICO (Annual)			£40.00 SO
Gardening for kids (stakes)	£12.44	£2.49	£14.93 DD

**Resolution:** The Council voted to approve the payments.

8.2 Receipts:

Receipts	Amount
PR Motors (Commissions on ads)	£175.00

8.3 Bank Reconciliations for April and May 2024

9 Motion to approve the use of 50% of Parish Council CIL money for the Pre-School Building. The amount of donation to the Pre-school would be £2,929.48 – Cllr Parkes seconded by Cllr Donahue 20:25

- 9.1 A Councillor asked what the surplus monies in the Pre-School's account was going to be used for. Cllr Parkes said that the Pre-School's budget for the rebuild was £180-200k so there was a shortfall despite the figures in their accounts.
- 9.2 Cllr Parkes added that the CIL money must be used towards the rebuild of the building and nothing else. She will write a letter to the Pre-School with this stipulation in it.  
**Resolution:** The Council approved the Motion.
- 10 Motion to approve Cllr Higley to purchase metal paint and additional items to renovate the climbing frame – Cllr Higley seconded by Cllr Smith 20:30
- 10.1 Cllr Higley requested that the Council support the costs of the paint which would cost approximately £80-100.  
**Resolution:** The Council approved the Motion.
- 11 Motion to approve any CIL money to be automatically transferred to the Parish Council from the SODC Infrastructure Implementation and Funding Team – Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Parkes 20:35  
**Resolution:** The Council approved the Motion.
- 12 Motion to approve a printer for the Bulletin printing – Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Parkes 20:40
- 12.1 The printing companies were discussed and the recommendation was for a local and high quality printer. Printinco was chosen because it met all the requirements and it was also the only company to respond to all the queries.  
**Resolution:** The Council approved the use of Printinco for the printing of the Bulletin.
- 13 Clerk Applications – Cllr Donahue
- 13.1 Cllr Donahue advised that there was 1 application and the applicant was not in the village. An interview will take place before the next meeting in September. The Clerk will ensure the OALC and the website will continue to advertise the position. The Henley Standard will also advertise the post.
- 14 Update on the Ruth Popper Playground – Cllr Higley
- 14.1 Cllr Higley reported that the laurel had been removed at the Playground but the stumps would be ground out at a later date. The vegetation was tidied up as well. SOHA will place a fence up at the boundary and will clear vegetation on the boundary. They were waiting for SODC to return to them about the manhole covers, potential drainage found and if there were any concerns about placement of equipment at the playground. Quotes had been sought for the protected tree areas because of the roots. The climbing frame was being renovated. Negotiations with Mend the Gap were ongoing for a potential grant for Playground equipment for disadvantaged children. Quotes for removal of wet pour and replacement of wood chips were also being obtained. A Councillor will write and post an article in the Bulletin and website for updated information on the Playground.
- 10 Items for Report and Inclusion on the next Agenda
- 10.1 A Councillor reported that a person had been snapping off vegetation in the village.
- 10.2 Invasive species had been found at the Playground. This had been reported to the police as this is a criminal offence. Crickets, flies and worms that are non-native species were

found in the Playground from opened packets. Pets, like geckoes, are fed on these and it may be that a person had acquired too many and dumped these in the Playground.

11 To confirm the date and time of the next meeting.

The next meeting is being held on Thursday, September 12, 2024 at 20:00.

12 Confidential discussion for thank you notes from the Parish Council

13 Meeting closed.

20:45

### **General Election**

This went smoothly, with SODC handling 3 constituency counts simultaneously at the Abingdon Sports Centre. There are no longer any Conservative MPs in Oxfordshire.

### **Impact of Change of Government Locally**

The desire of the new government to increase the number of homes built has been widely signalled, and already the National Planning Policy Framework is being amended. I understand that the ban on onshore wind turbines has already been lifted. I don't expect that the protection given to AONB (now National Landscapes) and National Parks will be relaxed, as these were originally created by the post war Labour Government. Perhaps the Green Belt around Oxford will be modified as Oxford is a target area for economic growth.

The mechanism of Local Plans, written by the local planning authority and approved by the Secretary of State after examination is likely to continue, and the fact that SODC has both a recent plan and has progressed very well on the new Joint Local Plan should mean that there should be no case for intervention by Central Government. There has been a steady chorus of complaints from the development industry about delays by planning authorities, but I see that one of the biggest developments in South Oxfordshire, called Didcot North East was granted planning consent in 2017 and is still being built.

### **Local Plan**

The evidence gathering and consultation on options part of the local plan process is now complete, and the team are putting together the plan with the expectation of a draft plan going out for consultation in the Autumn and then submitted for examination in the Spring of next year, 2025, and then adoption in late 2025.

SODC is hoping to be able to require greater thermal efficiency in new homes and to specify this in the plan.

Bio Diversity Net Gain ( BNG) is very much to the fore nowadays, and seems likely to be more important in the future. It appears that much recent BNG has been offsite from the development location, and to the benefit of organisations such as BBOWT.

