



MINUTES OF MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

At the Village Hall at 20:00 Thursday, June 8, 2023

Members Present

Chair	Diana Smith
Members	Katherine Higley Paul O'Grady Frances Parkes

Officers Present:

Clerk, RFO	Jane Yamamoto
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Public and Press:

The meeting started at 20:00.

- 1 **Apologies for absence & Mission Statement** 20:00
Cllrs Brazil, Donahue and Dragonetti sent their 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 present.
- 4 **Chairman's Announcements** 20:05
A Councillor said that they and another Councillor will offer help to the resident that is applying for the Adverse Application for the ownership of Muddy Lane.
There was no update on the removeable bollard on the High Street. During hay-making time, residents may see it pulled out and then replaced.
A Councillor was trying to find a land surveyor for the Playground land.
- 5 To approve minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council meeting of May 11 and the Annual Assembly of May 25, 2023.
Resolution: The Council voted to approve the minutes with two minor changes.
- 6 **Planning Applications – to discuss and agree Council's response to the following:** 20:10
- 6.1 P22/S1537/HH
18 Hillside, Hardwick Road, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HL
Conversion of an existing garage to living accommodation, replacement of a garage door with a double glazed window.
Resolution: The Council voted to submit the comment that they were content with the application if SODC deemed there was adequate parking for the applicant.
- 6.2 P23/S1592/HH
4 Old Barn Cottages, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EZ
Loft extension, single storey rear extensions, front bay window, single storey porch, external cladding, and internal alterations.
Resolution: The Council voted to support the application.
- 6.3 P23/S1433/HH
Farthings, Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ

Upward extension to create first floor accommodation, side and front extensions to increase footprint in line with first floor above, internal alterations, replacement windows and doors throughout, replacement roof covering and external rendering/cladding to existing dwelling.

Resolution: The Council voted to support the application.

6.4 P23/S1650/FUL

Former Theatre, Hardwick Estate, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7RD

Proposed new 3 bed dwelling on the site of the former theatre, including the conversion of an existing redundant storage building/workshop

Resolution: The Council voted to support the application.

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 sent apologies and no report.

7.2 OCC County Councillor Report - Cllr Bulmer – no report

8 **Finance:**

20:40

8.1 To approve the payment schedule for June:

Payment	Sub-total	VAT	Total
Staff expenditure			£506.80
Village Hall Grant (remainder)			£200
Red Rose (Cllr expense)			£9.99
Scofell (reduction of 2 cuts)	£647.28	£129.46	£776.74
Annual Assembly (Cllr Expenses)			£48.90 DD
King's Coronation (Clerk Expense)			£47.61
Village Hall (hire of projector)			£25
Claire Connell (Internal Audit)			£280

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the payments.

8.2 Motion to approve the Year End Financial Reports including the Annual Return (Attachment 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8). Cllr Smith seconded by Cllr Higley. 20:45

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the financial reports.

8.3 Motion to approve the AGAR: Annual Governance Statement (Section 1), Accounting Statements (Section 2), noting Internal Auditor report for 2022/2023 for submission to the External Auditor (Attachment 10, 11). Cllr Smith seconded by Cllr Higley.

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the AGAR for submission and noted the Internal Audit report.

8.4 Motion to approve the Notice to the Public to include the first 10 days of July 2023 (Attachment 12). Cllr Smith seconded by Cllr Higley

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the Notice.

9 Motion to adopt a Vexation Policy (Attachment 13) – Cllr Parkes seconded by Cllr O'Grady 20:40

9.1 A Councillor explained the background for the proposed motion. This motion was in response to a complaint from SODC to the Clerk that a resident had sent a planning officer repetitive and abusive communications. The Clerk had sent a reminder to Councillors not to forward the name

and contact details of Planning Officers. The OALC recommended that SODC should have its own Vexatious Policy and that the Parish Council should develop its own.

A Councillor also said that there were two other incidents where residents' communications were repetitive, increasingly angry and abusive via email and WhatsApp messages.

The Clerk was asked to contact the ICO for advice for how to share the content of communications to the rest of the Council and also if there could be a tagline on communications.

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the Motion for a Vexatious Policy and a draft will be circulated.

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| 10 | Motion to approve the replacement of swing seats in the Playground – Cllr Higley seconded by Cllr Smith – Motion deferred | 21:05 |
| 11 | Motion to approve the quotation to repair the Village Green car park (Attachments 14, 15) Cllr Parkes seconded by Cllr O’Grady – Motion deferred | 21:15 |
| 11.1 | A Councillor provided the background that this has been an issue for a long time. The original contractor had retired. It was only possible to obtain one quote. Whilst the material used for the repair in the quote provided is the same as the exiting car park material, the cost was significant due to it being relatively small area and the difficulty of installation. Some Councillors questioned whether this was a good use of funds, or indeed if Grasscrete was a sustainable material. It was agreed that a Councillor would continue to explore other possible options of surfaces and report back. In the event that this material and Contractor was chosen, the Contractor has confirmed that the work could be done during the Autumn half term for minimal disruption. The contractor would confirm the exact sizing of the repair and whether once it was carried out, how likely it would be that other areas would deteriorate.
A Councillor added that there was a duty of care to repair it in case there was an accident and that options were limited. Motion was deferred to see what other options there were. | |
| 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, July 13, 2023 20:00. | 21:20 |
| 14 | Confidential discussion for thank you notes from the Parish Council. It was agreed to send Thank you note to Jack Dabrowski and Knit and Stitch. | |
| 15 | Meeting closed. | 21:35 |

1. Introduction

Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council does not tolerate bullying, harassment or intimidation, in any form, of any of their employees or Councillors. This applies to such behaviour from members of the public and Parish Council employees/Councillors alike. A small percentage of people may correspond with, or complain to, Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council in a way that could reasonably be described as obsessive, harassing, bullying, intimidating, threatening, libelous, disrespectful or abusive.

2. Harassment

Under the Protection from Harassment Act 1977 S1(1)

A person must not pursue a course of conduct—

(a) which amounts to harassment of another, and

(b) which he knows or ought to know amounts to harassment of the other.

Such action can be:

- Physical Conduct;
- Verbal Conduct;
- Non-Verbal Conduct

3. Bullying

The Council defines bullying as a pattern of offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting, humiliating behaviour intended to undermine an individual or group, gradually and as a consequence eroding their confidence and capability possibly with the intention to force them to resign and this will not be tolerated.

Such behaviour may also be designed to annoy and/or to create extreme workload for a Parish Council which normally employs part-time officers up to a total of 8 hours per week, and to meet 11 times a year as a full Council.

Such behaviour might also be designed to cause extreme distress.

Such behaviour might also be repetitious.

Such behaviour from a minority of individuals can take up a disproportionate amount of limited Council resources and can affect the Parish Council's ability to do its work and provide a service to the community and can result in unacceptable stress for the Clerk, other Employees and Councillors

4. Defining Vexatious or Unreasonably Persistent Complaints

Vexatious or persistent complaints and correspondence can be characterised in the following ways:

- Behaviour which is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious and/or
- Behaviour which is designed to cause extreme distress, bully, humiliate and intimidate specific individuals and the Corporate Body and/or
- Frequent correspondence timed to cause the Council maximum disruption and workload and/or
- Behaviour which displays an insistence on pursuing unmeritorious issues, trivial points and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason and/or
- Displays an insistence upon pursuing complaints or issues in an unreasonable and

abusive manner and/or

- Repeated and/or frequent and/or simultaneous requests for information, whether or not those requests are made under the access to information legislation, and/or
- Behaviour where ex-employees are contacted to try to undermine Councillors and/or
- Behaviour which has the effect of hindering the Council's ability to go about its democratic business due to the extreme workload generated.
- Behaviour where the aim is character assassination.
- Behaviour characterised by a refusal to accept that issues raised are not within the power of the Council to investigate, change or influence

5. Use of this Policy

In the first instance, the Clerk will consult with the Chairman of the Council. With the Chairman's agreement, the complainant will be contacted in writing (also providing a copy of this policy), to explain why the behaviour is a concern and ask them to change their behaviour. If the behaviour persists and the Clerk or Councillors identify behaviour that they think exhibits these characteristics, and which they believe may be vexatious or unreasonably persistent, they should refer it to full Council under closed session.

In exceptional circumstances (for example significant time until the next available meeting), the policy can be triggered by e-mail consultation with a minimum of 5 Councillors including the Chairman or Vice-Chairman.

If the Council agrees with the assessment, it should prepare a brief statement of why it considers the complaint or correspondence to be vexatious, including its effect upon the Clerk, Councillors and/or the village. This should be accompanied by a report for the Council showing the workload effects and resource impact, and, if resources allow, information about the related correspondence via email, telephone and letter, including information about whom the correspondence was addressed to, who it was copied to, and a brief description of each piece of correspondence. The Council will follow all GDPR regulations in dealing with any complaint.

Sanctions can include:

- Being allowed to communicate with one nominated member of the Council or staff
- Being permitted to only communicate in a specific way, for example, letter rather than e-mail or telephone.
- Receiving no responses further enquiries and communications on the same matter if no substantive new issue is raised
- Receiving no responses to all enquiries and communications made to the Council for 6months if no substantive new issue is raised.

6. Handling correspondence and complaints deemed to be vexatious

The Clerk/Council will write to the correspondent advising them that their complaint and/or correspondence has been determined to be vexatious and giving the reason for that decision.

7. Residents of the Parish

If the complainant is a local resident of the parish, the notification letter should state which sanction the Council has imposed. They should be advised that the decision will be reviewed in six months from the date of the letter advising them that their complaint/correspondence has been determined to be vexatious. There is no route of appeal against the decision that a complaint or correspondence is vexatious. The District and County Councillors will be informed that a constituent has been designated as an unreasonably persistent or vexatious complainant.

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Review of Sanction:

At the following full parish Council meeting which occurs six months after the correspondent has been advised that their complaint and/or correspondence is vexatious, that decision should be reviewed. The Council should consider whether there has been any improvement in the vexatious behaviour over that time. The Clerk should write to the correspondent advising them of the outcome of the review. If the behaviour has improved, future correspondence can be treated in the normal way. If there has not been a significant improvement, the correspondence will continue to be treated as vexatious and will be reviewed annually.

8. Non-Residents of the Parish

If the complainant(s) does not reside in the parish, they will be advised that all future correspondence will be ignored and left unread. There is no route of appeal against the decision that a complaint or correspondence is vexatious.

9. Persistent communication on the same matter from multiple complainants.

If the persistent communication on one matter is from 4 or more complainants, rather than from one complainant, the Clerk or Councillors identifying the behaviour will draft a standard response to all further communications on that matter. As no sanctions are being imposed, this action can be triggered without approval at a full Council meeting.

10. Review

This document was approved for use at the meeting of the Parish Council on 8th June 2023, it shall be reviewed periodically.

Signed:

Dated:

22 May 2023

Quote for repairing section of failed grasscrete at Whitchurch village green car park

Repairing section of failed grasscrete at Whitchurch village green car park

Labour

Material sourcing	£	77.02
Demolition of failed existing section of grasscrete, removal of a sublayer to allow for new loadbearing layer installation	£	924.24
Geotextile membrane and loadbearing layer installation, levelling compacting	£	292.68
Separator membrane and sharp sand bed installation	£	115.53
Formwork and reinforcing mesh installation	£	385.10
Pouring C35 concrete	£	269.57
Removing tops of void formers	£	154.04
Topsoiling and seeding	£	161.74
Making good	£	115.53

Material

8 yard skip hire	1	£	320.00	£	320.00
Geotextile/geoseparator membrane	18	£	1.82	£	32.76
Type 3 granular loadbearing layer	6.5	£	71.22	£	462.93
Compactor hire	1	£	35.00	£	35.00
Sharp sand	1	£	69.65	£	69.65
Grasscrete formwork	9	£	38.93	£	350.37
A393 concrete reinforcing mesh	2	£	117.69	£	235.38
C35 concrete	1.1	£	291.12	£	320.23
Flame gun double burner hire	1	£	39.99	£	39.99
Sandy topsoil	1	£	129.89	£	129.89
Lawn seed	1	£	7.12	£	7.12

Item total including VAT £ 5398.52

Quote is valid for 60 days

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