

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL
Virtually at 20:00 Thursday 11th March 2021

Members Present

Chairman Jim Donahue

Members Katherine Higley
Carrie Leadbeater-Hart
Diana Smith
Jon Steward

Officers Present:

Clerk Jane M. Yamamoto

Public and Press: Resident, Daniel Faulkner (Punch Planning Consultant)

The meeting started at 20:00.

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| 1 | Apologies for absence & Mission Statement
No apologies were made. | 20:00 |
| 2 | Declaration of Interests by Councillors on any items on the Agenda
No declarations were made. | |
| 3 | Public Forum - an opportunity for members of the public to express their point of view on any item on the agenda. | 20:10 |
| 3.1 | Dan Faulkner, the Punch Planning Consultant, relayed some facts about the Greyhound Pub and had come to the meeting to ask for the Parish Council's opinion of the pub. That is, how it was run and how it could be improved.
Mr. Faulkner said that the pub just about breaks even, but they were uncertain of how long the situation could continue. The asking price was reduced from £675k to £495k. There had been one offer to date and that was to change the use. During lockdown, it had supported the pub with a 75% rent reduction.
The Parish Council advised that the current landlord was good and that the pub provided an essential place for local social purposes. It stressed its importance in the village and that it would do what it could to support it as no one wanted it to go. It was suggested that the consultants wait until the pandemic was over to see how the circumstances would change once lockdown restrictions were lifted.
It was recommended the Parish Council contact Mr. Faulkner or the area manager concerning the feasibility of the crosswalk for the pedestrian safety issue for residents to walk to school. | |
| 3.2 | A resident spoke to thank the Council for their patience and to input additional information needed to support the work on the Yew trees in Manor Road that had an impact upon their property. The Parish Council responded that the work requested was not covered under the report for the duty of care for these trees. Therefore, a second application would have to be made. The work that is currently approved by SODC could not wait for this approval. Any resident could apply to SODC for tree work using the same process via the SODC planning portal that the Parish Council used. | |
| 4 | Chairman's Announcements | 20:20 |

The Chairman announced the resignation of Cllr Ferguson. She had started a new family business and could no longer afford the time to remain on the council. The Council would like to thank Cllr Ferguson for all her hard work and dedication to the village, especially on the work she has done on the Tea Hut.

Pavements update

You will be aware of the work that was completed in February on laying an asphalt slurry to improve the evenness and to extend the life of the pavements around Swanston Field. A team from Pronin Ltd, carried out the work for Oxfordshire County Council. I think you will agree that this has resulted in a better-looking Swanston Field.

After a break, they are expected to complete the same work on High Street and Manor Road, which they measured for while doing the work on Swanston Field.

Road Markings Improvements in the Village

- The recent road closure in February for 3 days was in preparation for a full 'carriage dressing' to resurface the Highstreet from the bridge up through Whitchurch Hill with tar and chippings – similar to the recent work on Swanston Field pavements but with gravel as well. This will include a full refresh of the line markings along the route. The work in February were done by Hazel and Jefferies and included a number of improvements in addition to road patching:
 - o Vegetation clearance at the upper narrows is a great improvement for visibility
 - o The 10 soakaways on the Hill have been cleared
 - o The workmen also said that they had cleared the drains on the high street although it is unlikely that they cleared between the grates along the full length of the street. I am still following up with OCC on this.
- OCC traffic team were aware of the carriageway tar and chipping work planned in the village this summer on the High Street up through Whitchurch Hill, and that this would address the line refresh requested to address cycling safety. They planned additional line painting at the top of Whitchurch Hill to cover the areas not covered by the carriageway refresh, although budget for this has not been approved yet.
- The parents of the child who was killed on Whitchurch Hill in the cycling accident have been in touch with the Clerk to check about placing a memorial plaque at the site. Feedback from OCC is that this should be acceptable as long as it is a small and subtle post and plaque that is placed away from the road where it is unlikely to be accidentally knocked by any 'highway operations' or in itself become a distraction to road users.

20 mph Speed Limit next steps

Cllr Smith and I had a Teams meeting with OCC to discuss how Whitchurch could take advantage of the recent initiative to enable 20 mph across all built up areas in Oxfordshire.

- OCC invited Whitchurch to send plans of the roads we would like to be considered for a 20 mph speed limit. It should be sent ahead of 01 April to ensure we can get benefit from

funding that will be available to fund the cost of village and town speed surveys and consultation next Fiscal Year.

- The previous pre-requisite for achieving 20 mph was that the mean speed should be less than 24 mph to ensure it was self-policing. It was unclear if this requirement still applies to the current situation following OCC's recent motion on 20 mph being standard in built-up areas. Cllr Bulmer thought that most areas in the village should meet this requirement anyway except for Hardwick Road that runs into a much faster country lane. Traffic calming may be required there.
- We discussed the cost of implementing the 20 mph speed limit in Whitchurch. OCC thought the actual signage implementation should cost no more than £5,000. Surveys and consultation could cost another £4 -5,000 but this should be covered by the OCC budget being allocated next year.
- I have raised a motion for the PC to approve us submitting the request for a 20 mph survey now.

Pedestrian Safety for Eastfield Lane Crossing update

We discussed the next steps for evaluation of a pedestrian crossing at the Greyhound:

- The owners of the Greyhound, Punch Taverns, should be consulted before proceeding further. Whilst the proposal should not affect existing parking, the owners could object to it interfering with their existing right of access.
- We also agreed that it appears that the land required for a virtual pavement would be on public land and there appears to be plenty of room for both the existing carp parking and the virtual pavement.
- OCC said that a raised pavement would probably not be possible there due to the fact that there is no raised kerb on the Greyhound side.

Ferryboat Pavement Safety update

We discussed May/June target timeframe of the trials for Pedestrian Safety at the Ferryboat Inn:

- OCC is proposed 2 x 10-day trials – 2 weekends plus 5 weekdays each to see if they reduced the amount of infringement on the pavement:
 - o Giving priority from south to North
 - o Setting up traffic cones along the side of the pavement and road to see the impact of barriers such as bollards
 - o OCC Traffic team would like to be there for the first few hours to ensure the trial doesn't cause a hazard to traffic.
 - o Volunteers from the village would be helpful to monitor results during the 10-day period.
- OCC said that this needed to happen in next FY after budget was approved 1st April. It is still not approved at this point.
- It should also happen at a time when Covid restrictions are more lifted and while schools are in session to allow for typical levels of traffic.

New, more robust back stop fence for football goal:

- As previously approved, we have purchased the football net extension for the football goal backstop on the west side of the Village Green.
- The Parish Council received a £517 grant from the SODC Councillor Peter Dragonetti for the new extension to the football nets and the concrete installation. Thanks to Jane for submitting the application.
- The installation of the concrete mounting is now complete. A resident raised a concern that the concrete mounts that were put in last week could cause a hazard for tripping until the full net is installed. The FC has now taped off the area until the full net is installed.
- The owners of the paddock next to the Village Green have noted that there have been less balls going over the fence over the winter period with the goal at the north end. Despite our previous communications, they have asked if we still plan to move the goals back to the east west orientation. As this is still the plan with the newly secured backstop nets I will confirm this understanding to them

Polish Church Memorial Garden:

- Well done to Alexa and the Green Team have now installed the benches and flower pots that were purchased by the PC have now been assembled and installed making the area look very presentable. Cllr Steward and a number of volunteers have been involved to help out. Looking forward to the final steps such as an information board and the Cross being installed in time to enjoy the space in the coming months.

New Residents issues:

- Resident raised concern's about Yew trees impact on Old Barn Cottages – to be address separately on the agenda
- Resident requested trimming of trees and bushes along the opposite site Manor Road. One yew tree will be addressed by the Heritage Tree work. The Green Team is planning to support trimming the bushes with a work party, although they are unable to commit to a timeframe due to COVID restrictions.

- 5 To approve minutes of the meeting of December 3, 2020 and February 11, 2021. 20:25
Resolution: The Council voted to approve the minutes with the correction of one of the councillor's names.
- 6 Planning Applications – to discuss and agree Council's response to the following:
- 6.1 P21/S0492/DIS
The Limes, 14 Swanston Field, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HP
Discharge of condition 3(Schedule of Materials) in application P18/S1756/HH. Proposed front and rear extension and internal alterations.
Resolution: The Council voted to support the application.
- 6.2 P21/S0575/HH
5 Swanston Field, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HP
Proposed roof dormer and single storey side extensions following demolition of existing outbuilding
Resolution: The Council voted to support the application.
- 6.3 P20/S4130/FUL
Uplands Cottage, Hardwick Road, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HH

Demolition of existing bungalow and erection of replacement two-storey 5-bedroom dwelling (garage wing removed and dwelling repositioned close to existing bungalow as shown on amended plans received 19th January 2021 and preliminary ecological appraisal received 22nd February 2021).

Resolution:

The Council voted not to discuss this application as SODC’s planning officer had emailed that they had approved it.

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

7.1 SODC District Councillor Report (Attachment 1)

8 **Finance:**

20:35

8.1 **Resolution:** The following payments were approved for March:

Payment	Amount
Clerk salary (March 2021)	BACS
Zoom (March 2021)	£14.29 DD
Mode Transport	£462.00
OALC Annual membership	159.05
Claire Connell (Internal Audit 2019-20)	£280
Orlando A Impas Da Silva (footings)	£318
Alistair Aitchison (Top soil and seeds)	£120 + £40

8.2 Bank reconciliations

The Clerk updated the Council that the reconciliations would be signed by the Chair for the upcoming year end.

8.3 Motion to approve that CIL Monies for 2020-2021 be retained by the Parish Council – Clerk seconded by Cllr Donahue.

Resolution: The Council voted to retain the monies by the Parish Council.

8.4 Conclusion of Internal Audit 2019-2020 (Attachment 2)

8.5 South Councillor Grant Scheme results

The Clerk updated the council that Cllr Dragonetti had approved the £517 grant to be used towards the costs of the extension to the ball-stop net and the work to place the footings.

9 Standing Orders

20:50

9.1 Clarification of differences between Committees and Working Groups in Standing Order 4. - Cllr Leadbeater-Hart

Deferred

10 Terms of Reference

10.1 Motion: To approve the Terms of Reference for TAPAG using the new template – Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Smith (Attachment 3)

Deferred.

11 Village Hall

11.1 Motion: The Parish Council to agree that the draft ‘agreement’ between the Village Hall Management Committee and the Parish Council can be sent to the Village Hall

- Management Committee for their comments. – Cllr Higley seconded by Cllr Smith (Attachment 4)
Deferred.
- 12 OCC 21:25
- 12.1 Motion: To formally request OCC to perform a survey and consultation for a 20 mph speed limit in the village on the High Street, Hardwick Road and Manor Road – Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Smith.
Deferred.
- 13 Update for the Parish Council on the trees along the footpath close to the Toll Bridge - Cllr Higley
Deferred.
- 14 Village Conservation Area
- 14.1 Motion: The Parish Council to agree to confirm with Heritage Tree Services that the approved tree work for the Conservation Area should commence – Cllr Higley seconded by Cllr Smith 20:45
Resolution: The Council has voted to approve this work to commence.
- 14.2 Motion: The Parish Council to consider the request by a resident of the parish to have additional tree work undertaken in the Conservation Area (Manor Road) - Cllr Higley seconded by Cllr Smith
Resolution: The Council voted to defer this depending upon SODC application.
- 14.3 Update for the Parish Council on the Conservation Area Appraisal – Cllr Higley 21:50
Consultants are readying the report to submit to SODC. SODC will manage consultation process and adoption of the area.
- 15 Implications for any meetings that the Parish Council wish to hold except Parish Council meetings (e.g. public participation events) – Cllr Higley
Deferred.
- 16 Village Maintenance Contract
- 16.1 Motion to approve Scofell for the 2021 Village Maintenance Contract – Cllrs Steward and Cllr Donahue (Attachment 5)
Resolution:The Council voted to approve Scofell as the new contractors for 2021 Village Maintenance Contract.
- 17 Green Team
- 17.1 Motion to approve Green Team’s purchase and planting of summer bulbs – Cllr Steward seconded by Cllr Ferguson
Deferred.
- 17.2 Motion to approve Green Team purchase of trellis and climbing plant (for example, honeysuckle) at Triangle at the corner of Hardwick Road and High Street with approval of The Mount’s residents– Cllr Ferguson seconded by Cllr Steward
Deferred.
- 18 Residents’ Issues

- 18.1 Motion to approve updated Residents' Issues List – Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Smith (Attachment 6)
Deferred.
- 19 To review progress on any open actions from previous Parish Council meetings and agree any revision of actions on the action list.
- 20 To confirm the date and time of the next Meeting on 8th April 2021 at 20:00.
- 21 Confidential discussion for thank you notes from the Parish Council
No new thanks you notes identified. Councillors should send emails ahead of the meeting with candidates in the future.
- 22 Meeting Close 22:00

Attachment 1

Report to Whitchurch on Thames Parish Council March 2021

Council Operations

Many council officers are still working on Covid related support issues, both for individuals and businesses.

One programme that has been adopted is called Housing First, which is aimed at the people who have issues of various sorts. The traditional model of helping them is to first get them into B&B accommodation, and then address their issues such as addiction etc, and the last stage is to provide proper accommodation. Housing First puts people into a home of their own straight away, giving them a proper base, like the rest of us have, from which to help them address their problems of joblessness, mental health, addiction etc. By providing stability, it proves to be a much more effective way of working, and enables people to restart their lives. It is also cheaper, as the traditional model was something of a revolving door.

New Offices

I am not sure if I have mentioned before that the new offices which were originally planned for the Crowmarsh site are now going to be in Didcot, opposite the station where there are currently derelict buildings and a carpark. I am pleased about this, as it was my preference back in 2019 as Didcot is more accessible than Crowmarsh, and now the reality of people working from home has shown that the building can be smaller than originally envisaged.

Planning

We were all pleased to learn that a large speculative development for about 325 houses on the eastern edge of Didcot has been refused on Appeal. The Inspector made two interesting points, one being the impact on the AONB, as although the site was not in the AONB it was on the edge of it, and secondly that the Local Plan 2035 provided for all the housing need in the plan period through the strategic sites, and that large speculative developments such as this would not be permitted.

I hope that this could be relevant for that part of Reading Golf course site that lies in our area.

One of the sites in the local Plan was Chalgrove Airfield, currently used by Martin-Baker. The Civil Aviation Authority have just written a strong letter of objection to the planning application that has been submitted by Homes England, another government body. Is government joined up ?

Councillor Grant

I am pleased that each of the parishes in my ward applied for and have received a part of my Councillor grant. Of course it's not my generosity that achieves this, as we all contribute through our council tax.

Council Budget and Council Tax

The budget for SODC for 2021 2022 was approved by the Council last month, as was a rise in Council tax for a Band D dwelling of £5.

Tree and Thames Champions

At the last Council meeting it was also agreed to appoint Tree Champions, similar to the role of Thames Champion held by Councillor Jo Robb of Woodcote and Rotherfield . Councillor Ian Snowdon has been appointed as one, and myself as another. Ian is based in sparsely treed Didcot, where every tree is precious. The role is to promote the value of trees and woodland, and improve planting and conservation.

So far I have highlighted to all my fellow councillors the SODC Interactive map that shows all TPOs that are in place; this is a hidden gem on the SODC website and I plan to promote it to all parish councils. Councillor Jo Robb, whom you have read about in the Henley Standard, is a keen swimmer in the Thames, and is focusing on issues around sewage pollution and access to the river. You may be aware that the sewage works along the Thames can and do discharge untreated waste in the event of storm surges. There are monitoring instruments to monitor and record these, and Jo obtained the data from Thames Water. It appeared that Pangbourne works was almost continuously discharging. However, on investigation, it was revealed that the instrumentation was faulty, and recording “false positives”.

Although that is good in some ways, it demonstrated that Thames Water were not actually monitoring their instrumentation. They were embarrassed that they had released the data to us without checking. It should not be up to District Councillors, even Thames Champions, to check Thames Water’s processes or instrumentation.

White Lion, Crays Pond

I have just received notice from SODC as Ward Councillor that the owner of the White Lion is planning to sell, and therefore the various time periods of 6 weeks and 6 months, being for notice to bid and then to bid, have now commenced. It is not clear whether this is for sale of the freehold or, as previously, for a 25 year lease.

Peter Dragonetti