



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

At the Village Hall at 20:00 Thursday, May 12, 2022

Members Present

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

Officers Present:

Clerk	Jane Yamamoto
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Public and Press: Cllr Dragonetti, 2 residents

The meeting started at 20:00.

- 1 **Apologies for absence & Mission Statement** 20:00
No apologies.
- 2 Election of Chair, Vice-Chair, RFO and Chairs of Working Groups and Committees
- 2.1 The Chair, Cllr Donahue, the Vice-Chair, Cllr Smith, and RFO, the Clerk, Jane Yamamoto, were nominated and re-elected. The Chairs of the Working Groups were re-elected. Cllr Brazil was nominated and elected as the Open Spaces lead contact for the Green Team.
- 3 **Declaration of Interests** 20:10
There were no declarations.
- 4 **Public Forum** - an opportunity for members of the public to express their point of view on any item on the agenda.
There were no comments made.
- 5 **Chairman's Announcements** 20:15
20 mph update
OCC contractors are looking to start the practical works to change the speed limit from 30mph to 20mph on Wednesday 11th May and allowing until Friday 13th for this to be completed. The necessary legal changes will then take effect from the 13th.

I would like to propose meeting by the Tollbooth at 12pm Friday for a small ribbon cutting ceremony and photograph. The Henley Standard plans to send someone. I have invited County Cllr Bulmer, I think it would be appropriate to have a photo taken officially opening the 20 mph speed limit, probably by the toll bridge and village sign with the Parish Council and any other resident that may wish to join. I can also invite County Councillor Bulmer and OCC Highways. Unfortunately, it looks like Friday the 13th of May is the Day for this to happen!

Lower Narrows Bollards

OCC have now unfortunately come to the conclusion that installation of the bollards at the lower narrows NOT feasible due to the location of high voltage power utility lines precisely below the proposed location of the bollards.

OCC now believes that we have now exhausted the options available to improve pedestrian safety at the lower narrows. The physical limits of the lower narrows present certain inherent risks and the current solution is the best option in an imperfect stretch of road:

- Raised pavement was too difficult due to lack of highway width, complications with drainage, access to land owned by the pub and tripping hazards.
- Rumble strips were considered noisy and not appropriate for residential neighbourhoods.
- The trial of giving right of for traffic going from south to north concluded was that this would exacerbate tensions for drivers in a situation that is already often tense. This would result in a worse situation than the current dual Give Way set-up.
- Bollards – Whilst we have determined that they would fit in the narrows after a short trial, it is now not considered practical due to location of power cables. We did know that this solution, whilst good for pedestrian safety, raised potential issues with cyclists and drivers.

Given where we are, I think there are at least two recent actions that will help to improve the situation:

- The new 20 mph speed limit will increase safety to some degree
- The recently resurfaced road and repainted white lines make the virtual pavement clear for both drivers and pedestrians. We need to ensure it is repainted as required.

Finally, we may want to consider some actions to raise the awareness of residents that the stretch in front of the Ferryboat presents risks to pedestrians and they should be cautious when using that stretch especially during busy traffic periods.

Cllrs discussed the need to keep pressing for solutions for pedestrian safety. Cllr Donahue to place Cllr Leadbeater-Hart in touch with OCC regarding lower narrows pedestrian safety.

6 To approve minutes of the meeting of April 14, 2022.

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the minutes.

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

7.2 P22/S1324/FUL Coombe Park, Coombe Park Road, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7QT

The erection of a replacement dwelling and associated works.

During the discussion, one Councillor suggested that the Parish Council should be open to applying leverage to the applicant of the Coombe Park planning application. The Councillor suggested that the Parish Council could consider supporting the applications in exchange for the gift of a field.

Resolution: The Council voted to object to this application and request that the Conservation Officer thoroughly assess the current building to determine its historical and architectural value. The Council also requests that the District Council determine and consider the environmental impact of renovation versus demolition and re-build due to the scale of this project.

8 To receive reports from the representatives of Oxfordshire County Council and South Oxfordshire District Council 20:25

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

8.2 OCC County Councillor Report - Cllr Bulmer (Attachment 2)

9 **Finance:** 20:30

9.1 To approve the payment schedule for May:

Payment	Amount
Clerk salary (May 2022 and back pay)	TBA
Scofell (May invoice)	£720.24
Nova Press (Q1 Bulletin printing)	£395 BACS
Keri The Florist (Rose)	£12 BACS
SODC (Annual Premise Licence)	£70
Gallagher (Annual Insurance)	£754.43

The Clerk notified the Council of the increase in the annual premium of £127.49. The reasons for the increase include: they will pay on our behalf of the loss which the Council are legally obliged or permitted to pay on behalf of an insured person arising from a covered claim or investigation, increased costs, impact of COVID and change of regulations.

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the payments.

9.2 Bank reconciliations and reports

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the reports.

10 Motion to approve the costs of the hire of the marquee of up to £500. Clerk seconded by Cllr Donahue. 20:35

10.1 The Clerk advised that she had been trying to locate marquees since February 2022, but either none were available or quotes started at £3k. A neighbouring organisation to her work had 3 available for hire. She thought that 2 would suffice for £375.

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the costs, if required, for the Queen’s Jubilee.

11 Herald Graphics as the new printing company for the Whitchurch Bulletin. Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Smith 20:40

11.1 Cllr Donahue advised he had received an updated quote for printing the Bulletin from Herald Graphics for £417 for 350 copies, with A5 full colour cover (inside and out) – allowing for 3 full page advertisements, with 24 pages of articles. Advertising would only come later when we could show samples to the prospective advertisers.

The price was comparable to what the Council pay for the current Bulletin and would be significantly improved quality.

11.2 Cllr Donahue said that there was a prospect of reduced costs going forward as Herald Graphics would coordinate with other advertisers they already had contacts with in the area. The Editor of the Bulletin was also in favour of the change. The printing company had agreed to split the revenues according to the new advertising. Cllr Donahue proposed 60% for the printing company and 40% for the PC to reduce printing costs to give both sides incentive to increase advertising.

11.3 He advised that the current Editor of the Bulletin would continue, but the new printer could take responsibility for editing if necessary. A Councillor raised concern about using

colour ink for advertisements. Cllr Donahue said that colour would only be used for the front and back as is presently the case. He would ask if terms would be better if the Council agreed to a longer contract. The Council would contact the current printer to let them know of the plans.

It was agreed that additional information would be obtained before the Motion was approved by the Council.

12 Motion to approve the updated Residents Issues. Cllr Donahue seconded by Clerk (Attachment 3) 21:20

Resolution: The Council voted to support this motion.

13 Motion to appoint a tree surgeon to complete Phase 2 of the yew tree work in the Manor Road Conservation Area. Cllr Higley seconded by Cllr Smith. 21:25

13.1 Cllr Higley reiterated that the costs may increase if the work was not confirmed. After her article on the village website, 5 responses were in favour of the work.

Two Councillors will follow up with a neighbouring resident to clarify the land ownership.

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the motion.

14 Motion to allocate £250 from the Village Green maintenance budget to support the replacement Cricket Club cage netting on the Village Green. Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Smith 21:30

14.1 As highlighted in the April meeting, the deteriorated cricket cage netting was deemed dangerous and posed a risk of injury to other users of the Village Green. The Cricket Club had provided an initial quote of £550 to replace the netting and asked the PC for support. £250 could be allocated from the previously approved Village Green maintenance budget that was managed by the VG WG. The Cricket Club was also investigating grants and could use those funds for the remaining costs or reimburse the PC if successful.

The condition for this grant would be that the Cricket Club reconfirm membership of the Village Green Working Group as this was funded by the overall Village Green maintenance budget.

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the motion.

15 Motion to approve recommended supplier to improve the surface on Muddy Lane. Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Smith. 21:40

15.1 Charles Cotgreave and Neil Huntington of the Green Team received 3 quotes from suppliers to improve the surface of Muddy Lane with a goal of making it less muddy during the winter months.

The main benefit would be for the parents and children on the school run who park on Hardwick Road. This should have a side benefit of encouraging more parents to park on Hardwick Road during the school run, reducing traffic on Eastfield Lane and improving pedestrian safety for those families going to school by foot.

The improvements included smoothing the surface, removing excess mud, and supply, lay and compact 60mm thickness of screened tarmac planings on a prepared surface.

‘Muddy Lane’ bottom half towards the school– 160 x 1.5m

‘Muddy Lane’ top half by Hardwick Road– 114 x 2.4m

- 15.2 The recommended supplier was Dan Hazel who quoted £2,647 which was the lowest quote. The PC received a grant from OCC for £2,497 for this work. The OCC Countryside Access Officer had also provided permission to carry out the work.
- 15.3 Land registry searches indicated that there was no clear owner of the present footpath. The PC should separately investigate whether we would like to apply for ownership of this footpath as it was adjacent to other public areas, including the Village Green, Maze, Allotments and the School.
A councillor asked that the use of this footpath be monitored as cyclists used this frequently. Also, Cllr Smith would look into the PC landownership of this.
Resolution: The Council voted to approve the motion.
- 16 Queen’s Platinum Jubilee celebration - Clerk
- 16.1 The Clerk updated the Council on the planning of the celebrations. Many councillors offered to help on the day.
It was recommended that people would be encouraged to bring their own mugs, cups and saucers to avoid as much waste as possible.
- 17 Playground update – Cllrs Leadbeater-Hart and O’Grady 21:50
- 17.1 Cllr Leadbeater-Hart advised that she and Cllr O’Grady met with Playdale to get an idea of its 3D plans. Ideas and equipment were discussed and reviewed. Both the slide and 2 bouncing playground equipment were not in need of repair or replacement. The swing frame was sound, but the company would not be able to replace the seats or the chains. The hard standing was in good order. They recommended to strip away the wet pour and re-pour. If woodchips were used, they advised that it would be on a monthly basis to replace them.
- 17.2 Cllr Leadbeater-Hart advised that next steps included i) presentation to Council; ii) Motion for a village feedback/survey; iii) send the survey out and invite for volunteers for a Working Group; iv) pursue funding; v) obtain 3 quotes.
A Councillor recommended that a method statement be done for the protection of the tree roots, the impact of car traffic and noted that two additional quotes were expected. Also, that the plan had a lot of equipment in a small space and many children liked the free space already there. The Councillor also did not like the idea of picnic tables as they spent time weekly picking up rubbish; there was no equipment for risky play; most of the equipment favoured older children and; they commented that the use of woodchips would require weekly clean/replacement and maintenance as there was wildlife that frequented the playground on a regular basis.
- 18 To review progress on any open actions from previous Parish Council meetings and agree any revision of actions on the action list. 21:55
- 19 To confirm the date and time of the next meeting on Thursday, June 9, 2022 at 20:00 and the Annual Parish Assembly Thursday, May 26th at 19:30.
- 20 Confidential discussion for thank you notes from the Parish Council

20.1 The Council agreed to send out thank you letters to Hilary Jensen, The Lindsays and Charles Cotgreave and the Green Team.

21 Meeting closed.

22:00

Attachment 1

Report to Whitchurch Parish Council May 2022

Council Operations

SODC officers are continuing to provide support for Ukrainian families.

South Oxfordshire has more Ukrainian guests (555) than any other Oxfordshire District, nearly a 1/3 of the whole of Oxfordshire, with almost twice as many host addresses (203) as the next district on the list,

SODC is part of a county wide system to provide wrap around care for refugees, offering help with health, mental health, schooling and finding work.

I have heard that people who have offered to be hosts have been contacted very quickly, and have been impressed by the service from the Council officers. The national picture on visa's is rather different.

Financial Support for Fuel Costs

All households living in properties which are in council tax bands A-D are entitled to a £150 payment. The government is providing this money, also known as the 'council tax rebate', to help people with the rising costs of energy bills with the payments being made by local councils.

Over 54,000 households across South and Vale who pay their council tax by direct debit have now received the rebate payment from their district council. They will also receive a letter confirming the payment.

For people who don't pay by direct debit the process is more complicated, as is the additional discretionary scheme to support those on low income living in council tax band properties E-H who are not eligible for the rebate, details of which will be confirmed in the coming weeks.

Elections

Pleased to see that a successful green party candidate helped to change the control of West Oxfordshire

Planning

The number of planning applications in March was 25% down on March 2021

The consultation on the Joint Design Guide has now closed

Decisions are generally being made within the target times which are 13 weeks for major applications and 8 weeks for others, there has been an improvement of these times over the last 12 months.

Peter Dragonetti

GENERAL OCC REPORT

CONDITION OF ROADS AND PAVEMENTS SHOULD BE THE TOP PRIORITY

An Ipsos survey ahead of the local elections found that 50% of people believe the condition of roads and pavements should be the top priority for councils. Regrettably, these matters do not feature in OCC's nine top priorities.

THE VEGANISM DEBATE ROLLS ON



The controversy about the administration's decision to offer only vegan meals at Full Council meetings continues. The first such meal on 5th April attracted local and national media attention, prompting critics to ask how it could be more climate-friendly to serve imported fruit and vegetables such as kiwi and mango, rather than locally produced meat and dairy products. Far too much time is being spent on this ideological distraction when the council faces significant challenges in areas more pertinent to its core functions.

TRANSGENDER RIGHTS MOTION

A LibDem councillor successfully moved a motion at the April meeting of Full Council dealing with a number of transgender issues and stating that one gender inclusive bathroom should be installed in every public building owned or operated by the Council. The Conservative Opposition abstained on the basis that: the topic was far too complex and sensitive for a short council debate; the motion didn't provide significant safeguards for women; and that the costs of the building works were unspecified and could run into six figures.

POLICE CRITICISE 20MPH SPEED LIMIT PROPOSALS

As previously reported, the administration is spending £8m on the cosmetic exercise of switching signs from 30mph to 20mph on 85% of the county's roads with a 30mph limit. The 20mph limit is in effect voluntary as it will not be enforced by the police. The measure has continued to attract police criticism and a spokesman said: *"There is a proven link between road environment and character and the speed of drivers. If it is not accepted as realistic it will quickly be abused and be the source of constant demands for police action. The police stance still reflects that 20mph limits and zones should be self-enforcing."* Press report [here](#).

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

Accommodation

The majority of the accommodation visits across the county have now either been carried out or booked in. The number of properties being rejected for overcrowding or poor housing conditions remains very low in every district. There are a small number of partially approved properties that are waiting for improvements. The number of properties where guests have arrived before the accommodation visit takes place is also very low. OCC will continue to book in visits for new host properties that enter the system over the next few weeks.

Community support

OCC has been working with Asylum Welcome to ensure that both hosts and Ukrainians have access to a network of support – and that it is as safe and effective as possible. Asylum Welcome is keeping a track of all offers of community support across the county. To make best use of this significant response, together, OCC is proposing to expand the community liaison officer resource available in each district and the city to coordinate, advise and refer guests to the support that is available to them, including across housing, education and health.

Schools

School places are being found for Ukrainian children. Applications for school places from guests are being considered alongside all other applications but we are working hard to ensure that places are offered as close as possible to where guests are living.

Health

The government has recently published some [guidance](#) to help primary health care professionals assess and address the health needs of Ukrainian guests.

Help with queries can be found here:

- **Website:** www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ukraine
- **Oxfordshire Ukraine helpline:** +44 1865 966444 / 01865 966 444 (opening hours: 8.45am - 5pm, Monday to Friday. Closed weekends and bank holidays).
- **Email:** ukraineresponse@oxfordshire.gov.uk

OCC COMMITS TO ENABLING MORE TREES TO BE PLANTED

A change in approach will help increase the number of trees in Oxfordshire after a new policy with cross-party support was approved. The policy will put the emphasis on a ‘presumption in favour of trees’. Bill Cotton, Oxfordshire County Council’s Director of Environment & Place, said: “This is a bold and ambitious long-term policy to increase investment in trees across the county. Trees are valuable assets for so many reasons and we aim to give them more prominence when looking at areas including planning, transport, connectivity and health. “We want to move away from simply maintaining and managing the trees on our land to actively encouraging and enabling more trees to be planted in both rural and urban settings. This can help tackle climate change and increase resilience to it, as well as improving people’s quality of life – both now and in the future.” One requirement of the policy is to plant two new trees for every tree that has to be removed from county council land. It also promises to explore new tree planting opportunities and extra investment to carry it out, stricter guidelines for those wanting to remove existing trees and implement proactive care to prolong the lives of established trees.

CONTACT DETAILS

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