



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

At the Village Hall at 20:00 Thursday, May 23, 2024

### Members Present

Chair	Jim Donahue
Members	Dianna Smith – Vice Chair Katherine Higley Debbie Leach Paul O’Grady Frances Parkes Nick Brazil

### Officers Present:

Clerk, RFO	Jane Yamamoto
------------	---------------

**Public and Press:** 1 resident

The meeting started at 20:00.

- 1 **Apologies for absence & Mission Statement** 20:00  
No apologies were sent.
- 2 Election of Chair, Vice-Chair, RFO and Chairs of Working Groups and Committees
- 2.1 **Resolutions:** The Parish Council voted to re-elect the Chair, Vice-Chair, RFO and Chairs of Working Groups and Committees.
- 3 **Declaration of Interests**  
There were no declarations of interests.
- 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 members of the public wanting to make a comment.
- 5 **Chairman’s Announcements** 20:05  
Cllr Donahue updated the Council on a situation of anti-social behaviour in Pangbourne that was highlighted at their annual village assembly. The problems seem to be focussed around a group of youth on bicycles. Pangbourne’s clerk has since updated that the police have now confronted the individuals and things have settled down somewhat.  
  
The council discussed that there were a few recent incident on the Village Green, but these don’t seem to be continuing.  
  
**Action-198:** Cllrs Parkes and Smith to review ToR for Village Green WG and TAPWG.
- 6 To approve minutes of the meeting of May 23, 2024. 20:10  
**Resolution:** The Council voted to approve the minutes.
- 7 Planning Applications – to discuss and agree Council’s response to the following: 20:15
- 7.1 P24/S1318/DIS  
Whiteways, Hardwick Road, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HW

Discharge of condition 7 (Tree Protection) on planning application P24/S0464/FUL (Subdivision of existing dwelling into two dwellings; to include proposed single storey rear extension and a 2-storey extension to the inner north elevation, construction of a new porch to east elevation and detached garages. Associated parking, landscaping, private amenity and access arrangements).

**Resolution:** The Parish Council cannot submit comments on Discharge Conditions.

7.2 P22/S1510/DIS

Oakfield, Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ

Discharge of conditions 03 – Materials, 06 – Arboricultural Method Statement, 07 – Landscaping, 08 – Biodiversity, 10 – Charging Point and 12 – External energy Generation on planning application P23/S4171/FUL. Replacement dwelling involving demolition of existing house and garage.

**Resolution:** The Parish Council cannot submit comments on Discharge Conditions.

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

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

**Action-199** Cllr Donahue will raise a complaint to SODC Planning Enforcement for a dwelling in Goring Heath.

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

9 **Finance:**

20:25

9.1 To approve the payment schedule for May:

Payment	Sub-total	VAT	Total
Staff expenditure (May)			£541.80
Annual grant for the Village Hall			£1,200.00
Red Rose for Playground (Cllr Higley)			£9.99
SODC (Licence for Band A)			£70.00
OALC – Training JD	£30.00	£6.00	£36.00
OALC – Training DS	£30.00	£6.00	£36.00
Gallagher (Annual Insurance)			£902.22
Herald Printing Services			£743.00
Community Heartbeart	£62.00	£13.59	£81.54

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

9.2 Receipts:

Receipts	Amount

9.3 Bank Reconciliations (end of March 2024)

9.4 Internal Controls Policy for Q3 2023 and Q4 2024

20:30

The Clerk outlined the Internal Controls reviewed and approved by Cllr Parkes. She thanked Cllr Parkes for her work on these financial reviews.

9.5 Motion to approve the New Financial Regulations - Cllr Parkes seconded by Cllr Donahue

20:35

9.5.1 The Clerk advised that the only procedure that was actioned was having one bank signatory to set up approved payments and another to complete them. This was the only procedure that the Council had not been following from the new regulations.

- Resolution:** The Council voted to approve the Motion.
- 10.0 Motion to approve the Insurance Renewal –Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Parkes 20:40
- 10.1 The Clerk advised that the new benches had been added to the asset register and there was a small increase of £82.65 to reflect this.
- Resolution:** The Parish Council voted to approve the Motion.
- 11.0 Motion for the Parish Council to Advertise for a new Clerk/RFO – Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Smith 20:50
- 11.1 The Council will advertise on the village website, OALC and SLCC. The Chair said that if necessary, the position could be advertised on Indeed.
- Resolution:** The Parish Council voted to approve the Motion.
- 12.0 Motion for the updated Standing Orders to be approved by the Council– Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Parkes 20:50
- 12.1 The Clerk explained that if a Councillor missed all Parish Council meetings in a 6 month period, they would be automatically removed from their position on the Council. All Councillors needed to notify the Clerk with reasons for their absence. It would be noted on the Minutes of Meeting. The Council could only resolve to accept apologies if their reasons for absence were military or jury duty or a family crisis.  
It was agreed that the Clerk update the Standing Orders to reflect the updates on recording apologies.
- Resolution:** The Parish Council voted to approve the Motion.
- 13 Motion to purchase wooden labels for the Manor Road Conservation Area – Cllr Higley seconded by Cllr Parkes. 20:55
- 13.1 A Councillor advised that residents were asking about the species of plant at the Manor Road Conservation Area. It was thought to be a good idea to label them and eventually tie these to the descriptions of uses for them. These labels were estimated to be about £12.
- Resolution:** The Parish Council voted to approve the Motion.
- 14 Motion to approve the annual £1200 grant for the Village Hall (Attachment 11)– Cllr Higley seconded by Cllr Smith 21:00
- 14.1 A Councillor raised the question if more electrical sockets could be placed in the Village Hall. It was noted that an electrician had approved the electrics in the hall, but there was a question whether more of them could be placed within the building due to its age.
- Resolution:** The Parish Council voted to approve the Motion.
- 15 Motion to approve the erection of a third direction sign for the Polish Memorial Church gardens (Attachment 12) Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Smith. 21:05
- Resolution:** The Parish Council voted to approve the Motion.
- 16 To review progress on any open actions from previous Parish Council meetings and agree any revision of actions on the action list. 21:10
- 17 Items for Report and Inclusion on the next Agenda
- 17.1 Conservation Area Appraisal – A Councillor reported that there was a large backlog of work as they only have 2 members of staff.

- 18 To confirm the date and time of the next meeting.  
The next meeting is the Annual Parish Meeting and it will be held on Thursday, June 13, 2024 at 19:00. An abbreviated Parish Council meeting will be held after the Annual Parish Meeting to cover any urgent business.
- 19 Confidential discussion for the vote for the Whitchurch Award and thank you notes from the Parish Council 21:15
- 20 Meeting closed. 22:00

Attachment 1

## **Report to Whitchurch on Thames Parish Council**

### **Accommodation for Resettlement Scheme**

The £1.2 billion Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) is an innovative capital fund that supports local authorities in England to obtain housing for those who are unable to find settled accommodation on Ukrainian and Afghan resettlement and relocation schemes.

Funding from central government has enabled SODC to progress with acquiring 33 homes for this scheme.

### **Capita**

The Council is continuing to bring services back in house, with the transfer of the switchboard service aiming to be complete by 1 July

### **The Way Ahead**

The consultation on the five key themes of the South Oxfordshire new Corporate Plan to cover the next 4 years has ended. The themes reflect the general direction that the elected council has been pursuing since being elected in 2019 and again last year. Of course the District Council has a limited range of powers, but I am pleased to say that slowly some of the objectives are coming to fruition. Worth mentioning is the transition from fossil fuel heating at Leisure Centres to heat pumps and solar heating.

### **Annual Meeting of the Council and Code of Corporate Governance**

At the Annual Meeting of the Council last week, the Council considered and adopted the Code of Corporate Governance, which sets out all the procedures, processes and principles that the Council should follow. It's very difficult not to agree with all the matters set out in it.

The Annual Meeting of the Council is also the time at which the membership of various committees is agreed. One of the important committees is Scrutiny, where the decisions of the leadership are examined. This is a useful function when there is a good opposition, but needs special attention when there is only one conservative councillor.

I am continuing to serve as Vice Chair on the Planning Committee, the most active and high profile of the Council's committees.

### **Riverside Wallingford**

The campsite, pool and splash pad experienced some bad flooding earlier this year, but the damage has been fixed and the facilities reopened. Encouraging that this is one of the new designated bathing water sites. This does not of course mean that it is safe to swim in the river, only that the water quality is going to be measured.

### **Planning**

The first of the Strategic sites designated in the last local plan is coming forward for planning application, this is called Bayswater Brook and is located in the north of the district just outside the Oxford Ring Road.

On the planning committee we are now being advised on the outcomes of planning appeals. It is encouraging that decisions by the Council are usually upheld, and particularly on those rarer occasions when the Planning Committee has gone against the officers recommendation and the committee decision is endorsed by the Inspector. In April, the Planning Inspectorate dismissed two appeals and allowed one, and a further five appeals were started.

Peter Dragonetti

**GENERAL OCC REPORT**

**OXFORDSHIRE 'PARK AND RIDE' SITE BUILT WITHOUT ROAD ACCESS**

OCC has almost finished building a £51m 'park and ride' site with 850 spaces near Eynsham, but it remains closed because there is no access road. Concerns have been expressed that the site will sit unused for years until OCC secures funding to build the necessary road. However, the council stated that the park and ride site was intentionally completed ahead of the roadwork to save costs amid rising inflation and construction expenses. The broader A40 improvement plan, including bus lanes, is now subject to funding discussions with Homes England and the Department for Transport. OCC hopes to finalise funding agreements soon and to have the park and ride fully operational by 2027.

**OCC SEEKS TO EMBED COMMERCIAL MINDSET**

OCC has launched an authority-wide strategy to “get the organisation thinking more commercially” – which could lead to “bigger opportunities” in the future. An overview of the commercial strategy presented to OCC’s cabinet, states that the council “aims to optimise organisational efficiency and generate sustainable revenue through innovative and responsible commercial activities”. Some councillors have raised concerns around the council’s need to get the right balance between commercial endeavours and serving residents. Councils have a very mixed record when it comes to making investments outside their areas of expertise.

**HIF1 ROAD SCHEME**

A public inquiry into plans for a £269million road scheme has reached its final stages. Closing statements relating to the planning application for the [Didcot](#) and surrounding areas major infrastructure (HIF1) scheme were heard on April 23. OCC has been planning the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF1) scheme for almost a decade. The proposals included creating a dual carriageway on the A4130 from the A34 Milton Interchange towards Didcot, new bridges and a Clifton Hampden bypass. In July 2023, [Michael Gove called in the planning application](#) after OCC applied to itself for planning permission but the OCC planning committee refused it – despite recommendations from officers that it should be approved.

**OFSTED JUDGES CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN OXFORDSHIRE AS “GOOD”**

Ofsted has judged OCC’s children’s services as good as part of an inspection that took place in February 2024. The assessment took place as part of the government’s [inspecting local authority children’s services \(ILACS\) system](#). Inspectors praised the county council for a number of improvements across its services [since its last inspection in 2018](#), which were also judged overall as good, leading to even better outcomes for children and young people.

**HEADS OF TERMS AGREED WITH OXFORD UNITED FOR STADIUM LAND**

An agreement has been reached on heads of terms for OCC to lease land it owns near Kidlington for Oxford United to develop a new football stadium. The council’s cabinet agreed in principle for land known as the “triangle” to be leased at its meeting in September 2023. Detailed negotiations have now led to heads of terms being agreed. A number of other key legal and partnership agreements will follow to meet the council's strategic objectives and also to ensure that the club fulfils its commitments to the local community and sports groups.

### **SPECIFIC OCC REPORT FOR GORING PARISH**

I've been working closely with Goring Parish Council and OCC highways fine tuning the PC proposed changes to the current Goring highway scheme where the residents of the Birches in particular have raised concerns and hope the final scheme will benefit all.

### **SPECIFIC OCC REPORT FOR STOKE ROW PARISH**

Just want to reassure Stoke Row that I am and will continue to lobby for improvements to their woefully inadequate pavements.

### **SPECIFIC OCC REPORT FOR CHECKENDON PARISH**

I've also asked for some extensions to the checkendon 20mph in line with the PC requests. While not a fan of blanket 20mph speed limits as a targeted measure they are a very useful safety measure and feel these suggested changes full well and truly into this area.

**Address:** Councillor Kevin Bulmer, County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

**Email/Tel:** [kevin.bulmer@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:kevin.bulmer@oxfordshire.gov.uk) 07803005680

**Twitter:** KevinBulmer@bulmer\_kevin



## Parish Council Contribution to the Village Hall 2024

Katherine Higley, John Bradon 16/5/2024

In the past, the PC has made a contribution to the village hall's running costs. The Village Hall Management Committee (VHMC) and PC share a goal of encouraging more activities in the village. Activities like afternoons teas aim to reduce loneliness and classes, like the mother and baby group, help people to meet. A strategy of keeping hire charges has as to encourage more activities over the last few years: most recently the weekly Dance and Painting classes.

Also, some specific activities were supported with no charge including:

- PC meetings
- Supplying the tables and chairs for the Gardens Walk and other celebrations.
- Hosting the Arts & Crafts Exhibition

To make the hall useful as a Place of Refuge in emergencies, the VHMC has also purchased a generator, a hub for charging phones, equipment for making hot drinks, etc. We are not charging for the purchase, storage or maintenance of this equipment. We would welcome a further grant from the PC in 2024 and this would enable us to keep improving the hall. Two specific initiatives are to further reduce energy use by bringing the roof insulation up to the latest standard and to somehow improve access to the hall for users who have difficulty walking.



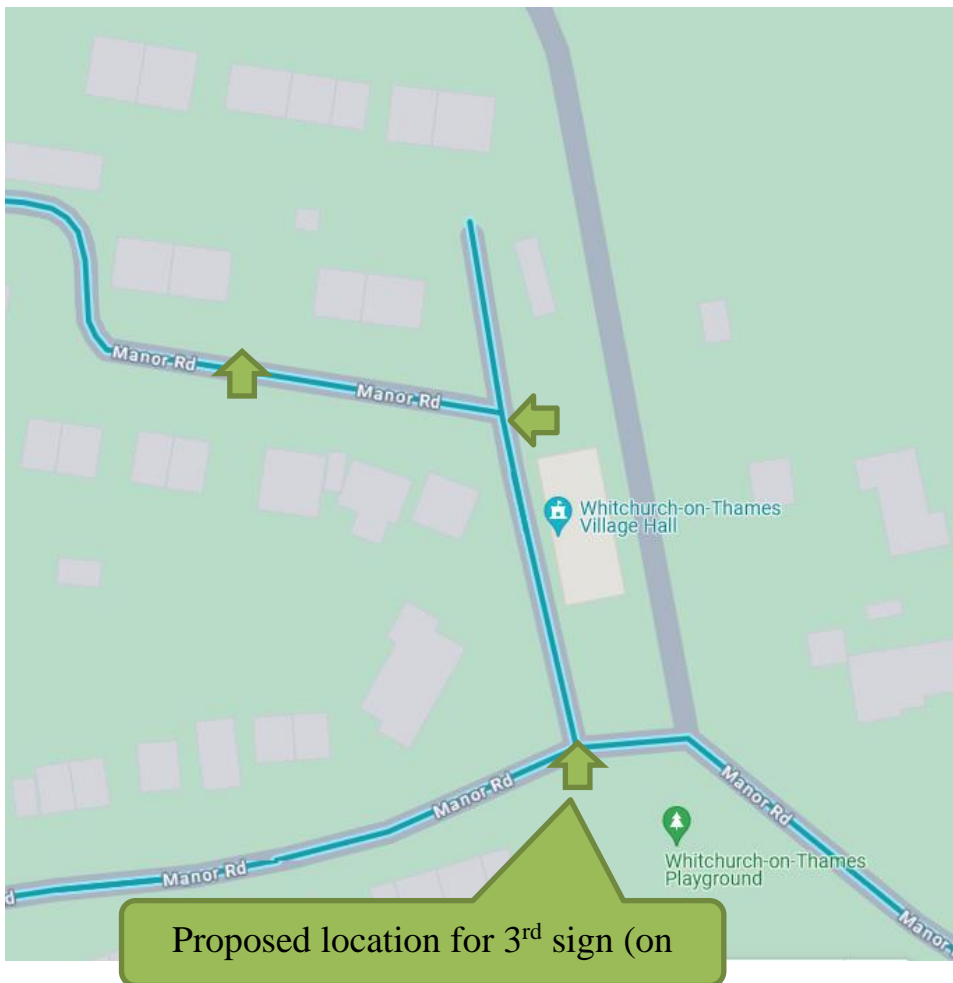
Attachment 12

Third Direction sign to Polish Church Memorial Garden

Note from John Bradon 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024

In November last year, John Bradon gave the PC an update on this project. The Interpretation Board has now been completed and installed. After consultation with some local residents and SOHA (the housing association that owns many properties in Manor Road), two direction signs have also been installed. People seem happy that the small signs are not obtrusive.

It was planned that the third sign would be put on the railings outside the substation next to the Village Hall. However, this sign wouldn't be easily visible to anyone walking from the High Street. A better location would be the lamppost by the playground at the bottom of the part of Manor Road that leads to the Polish Garden. (Please see map below).



Would the PC approve this new location?