



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL
Virtually at 20:00 Thursday 8th October 2020

Members Present

Chairman	Jim Donahue
Members	Jean-Marc Grosfort Katherine Higley Carrie Leadbeater-Hart Diana Smith Jon Steward

Officers Present:

Clerk	Jane M. Yamamoto
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Public and Press:	Laura Lucas
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The meeting started at 20:00.

- 1 **Apologies for absence & Mission Statement** 20:00
Cllr Ferguson sent her apologies.
- 2 **Declaration of Interests** by Councillors on any items on the Agenda
Cllr Smith declared she was a member of TAPAG. Cllr Higley declared that she was a resident of Manor Road. Cllr Leadbeater-Hart declared that she had an interest for planning application 6.2.
- 3 **Public Forum** - an opportunity for members of the public to express their point of view on any item on the agenda. With the Chairman's permission, a member of the public may express their point of view on specific items of business. Five minutes are reserved per item.
- 4 **Chairman's Announcements** 20:05
There are a number of long- standing requests to OCC for maintenance or improvements to the village that are now finally coming to fruition.
 1. Pavements:
 - Work to perform a complete resurfacing of Hardwick Road pavements was completed in the first two weeks of October. There was some disruption to school run drop off the for a couple of days but we tried to keep the school informed of the progress. This work was prioritised due to the poor condition it was in for so many years and the need to support families using it for access to the school.
 - Work to repair damaged parts of other pavements at Swanston Field, the High Street and Manor Road is planned as part of a separate program that they expect to happen by the end of the year. This will be done by a different contractor focusing on repairing marked out areas using "slurry seal" work as opposed to a complete resurfacing.
 2. Drainage clearing in the village:

- OCC drainage contractor OPC have been in the village a number of times since June to clear blocked drains. They had done a considerable amount of investigation and drain clearing in the area around the Greyhound following the Flash Flooding in June. The work to clear drains on Swanston Field and Hardwick Road is completed. They were unable to finish the upper High Street drainage clearing work including repair work at the Art Gallery due to access issues with the road closure on Whitchurch Hill. Now that this is finished, I have asked for dates for them to return.

3. Longer term drainage solution:

- OCC have said that they have decided on a solution to address the shortcomings of the drainage system in the "Greyhound bowl" area. This will involve replacing a pipe connecting the drainage at the Greyhound side of the High Street with the main drainage system on the other side of the street with a larger diameter pipe. They have put this in next Fiscal Year's budget request. This follows recommendations from the Flash Flood Team formed from Emergency Team members. Their reports are available on the Web-site.

4. A dangerous rut on the side of Hardwick road opposite the Jubilee hedge has now been repaired after escalating this as a priority. The hedges there were also now cut back to make more space for vehicles to reduce the need to drive on the verges.

While we still have not made a decision to take responsibility for replacing the Tea Hut, we have received a grant from Cllr Bulmer for £2,000 for the Tea Hut replacement. If we don't take responsibility for this project, we can donate it to the Cricket Club.

Coombe Park Fence work to replace the green metal spiked fence with a wooden paling is progressing well. Planting of indigenous shrubs are still planned. I think we can all agree that is a huge improvement and much more suitable for the Thames path and AONB. Well done to Coombe Park Estate, SODC planning, and everyone who fought to get these changes approved.

5 **To approve minutes of the meeting** of 9th of July, 10th of September and 1st October 2020. 20:10

Resolution: The minutes for September 10th and proposed changes to July 9th and October 1st minutes were approved.

6 **Planning Applications** 20:15

6.1

P20/S3353/FUL

Technology Centre, Bozedown Drive, Whitchurch Hill RG8 7QR

Minor material amendment to P19/S4248/FUL for the regularization of alterations to the exterior of buildings D and H. Re-development of the site to include demolition of time expired buildings (G,K, M, N, S (all to be fully demolished) and U (part demolition to remove store room) and replacement with a single building (Building H). Refurbishment of existing laboratories (Building D).

Resolution: It was agreed to submit that the WOT PC supported the application.

6.2

P20/S3387/HH

4 Bridge Cottages, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7DE

Proposed two storey side and rear extension.

Resolution: It was agreed to submit that the WOT PC supported the application with advice from Tree Officer.

6.3

P20/S3309/TPO 10S18 and P20/S3307/TPO 97S13

1 Swanston Field, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HP

Amended specification of works to Lime and Beech, Whitchurch Cricket Ground/Village Green Eastfield Lane Whitchurch on Thames.

Resolution: It was agreed to submit that the WOT PC provided consent for the applicant to carry out the works outlined by the Tree Officer.

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 OCC County Councillor Report

8 **Finance:**

20:30

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

Payment	Amount
Clerk salary (October 2020)	BACS
Overtime hours for Clerk for FOI	27 hours
Expenses for Village Maintenance -Clerk for Cllr Steward	£85.21
Bugler for Remembrance Sunday	TBC
Jim Donahue (Zoom) 1 month	£14.39
Green Team expenses (£200 plants for Manor Road, time dependent upon work by Cllr Higley); £60 plants Wallingscote Drive; up to £200 scalpings to re-surface muddy Lane	£60 for plants for Wallingscote Drive approved.
Alistair Aitchison for Football re-seed	£68
Heritage Tree Services report Approve report and send to OCC	£540
Environment Agency	65.56

Action: Cllr Donahue to ask what plants would be proposed and from which suppliers. Also, what kind of scalpings to be used.

Action: The Clerk to check with Goring Parish Clerk for the costs of the bugler for the Remembrance Sunday event and also if the ceremony would proceed given the government COVID-10 guidelines.

Action: Cllr Donahue to check with the new Vicar about the potential use of video for the event.

8.2 **Audit**

Resolution: It was agreed that the audit and financial documents were approved for the last financial year.

8.3 **Financial Risk Assessment and Management**

Resolution: It was agreed that 2020-21 financial risk assessment and management documents were approved.

9.0 **FOI Policy/Complaints Procedure**– Clerk and Cllr Higley

20:50

Cllr Smith recommended that the PC minutes were made more accessible on the village website by being just one click away. It was also recommended that the classes of information on the website for the Parish Council be more accessible. It was considered that future meetings be recorded, but one councillor needed to check if their work would permit this. Cllr Higley to send FOIA and guidance to Councillors.

Action: Cllr Leadbeater-Hart to review the Parish Council information on the web-site with a view to making it easier to find and understand. She will work with Hilary Jensen and Richard Wingfield of the web-site team.

Resolution: It was agreed to adopt the FOI Policy and Complaints Procedure and that Cllrs Higley and Leadbeater-Hart were to become Internal Review Officers for the complaints process.

10 **New Tea Hut replacement** 21:27

-Motion to have Cllr Grosfort investigate feasibility

Cllr Grosfort asked for clarification of the use of the tea hut, which would then determine the size. Cllr Grosfort asked to be sent thoughts from the Councillors as well as the Cricket and Football Clubs. Cllr Steward will approach both clubs for input.

Resolution: It was agreed that Cllr Grosfort would lead a Parish Council feasibility study to ensure that the Parish Council understand its use and purpose and was being careful about investment of public funds before making any commitment to taking it on. For example, would the Tea Hut require toilets and also disability facilities if the refurbished Pavilion already had them.

11 **Village Green** – Cllrs Ferguson and Steward 21:30

11.1 **Use of CCTV**

Cllr Ferguson has reviewed the CCTV on the allotments, which were about £200, however this type of system had limitations and was not recommended by the providers she had talked to for the previous Village Green quotes.

Cllr Leadbeater-Hart spoke to members of the Cricket and Football Clubs and was reassured that no new glass had been found for more than 5 weeks. Cllr Steward said if there was a bottle dump at the Village Green in the past and if glass could be coming up from the ground.

Resolution: It was agreed that as the glass at the goal mouth was not ongoing, so the Council should hold off for a month and wait before additional investigations into CCTV would be progressed.

11.2 **Update on gate security** – Attachment 2

Cllr Steward said that he and Cllr Ferguson had met with a representative from the OCC Oxfordshire Gypsies & Travellers service. They only recommended that a padlock be added, bolts were spot welded on top of the hinges of the gate and threads were filed down. They did not believe that the Village Green was an attractive target for travellers. The Councillors were thanked for their time and clear reporting.

Action: Cllr Steward to purchase a padlock and carry out the welding on the car park gate.

- 11.3 **Update on signs**
 Cllr Ferguson will be sending out designs for the signs which would be facing out at the metal gate and top end.
- 11.4 **AFC Whitchurch use of floodlights** – Cllr Leadbeater-Hart
 Cllr Leadbeater-Hart asked on behalf of the Football Club to use portable floodlights in the winter months. It was agreed that temporary lights would need to be checked with SODC.
Action: Cllr Leadbeater-Hart to follow up with SODC.
- 12 **Trees in village** – protection and preservation – Cllr Higley 2150
 Cllr Higley, on the suggestion of her eldest daughter, recommended that a tree fairy look after the trees within the village. It could be a resident or someone from SODC to survey trees for TPOs for list ancient trees on public land. She mentioned that 400 year- old Yew trees and other trees had been lost in recent years. It could be someone within SODC that had the responsibility of the woodlands trust or can place a TPO on a tree. It was suggested that this issue be highlighted on the village website.
Action: Cllr Higley to propose a more formal description of the role and terms of reference for approval at a future meeting.
 Cllr Higley presented the Heritage Tree Services report and asked approval from the Council so that it could be sent to SODC. SODC could approve some, all or none of the work proposed to be carried out. The invoice for the report was also for the work to be carried out on the Yew trees and not the couple of trees in the playground that needed to be reviewed for Health and Safety reasons. It was agreed that there had been a budget agreed for work to be carried out. The second part of the report highlighted the need for some attention on other trees.
Resolution: It was agreed to approve the report and send to SODC.
- 13 **Village Hall** – Jazz band – Cllr Grosfort 22:00
 Cllr Grosfort reminded all that the Village Hall was a separate entity and not a Working Group of the PC. He said that it was necessary to try to balance the account and support the maintenance costs through the hiring of the hall. For example, a jazz band had approached him to hire the hall every Thursday of the month to bring in £900 or 17% of the operational costs of the hall. As the PC reserves the Village Hall one Thursday every month for meeting, he needs to get the Parish Council’s approval to have meeting in the Old Stables or another location instead that the PC may need to pay for. He felt that he should not have to discuss the management of the hall with the PC and wait for the next meeting for approval. It was emphasised that the council was using public finances and therefore must be prudent about costs.
Resolution: If the Village Hall’s management find a lucrative business for each Thursday evening which will conflict with the PC meeting, the Village Hall management will be responsible to relocate the PC meeting and the cost will be reimbursed by the Village Hall Management committee so that the PC is not negatively impacted.
- 14 Extraordinary Meeting – follow up - deferred. 22:15

15	Green Team Update – deferred	
16	To review progress on any open actions from previous Parish Council meetings and agree any revision of actions on the action list.	22:25
17	To confirm the date and time of the next Meeting on 12th, November 2020 at 20:00.	
19	Meeting Close	22:30

**Attachment 1 – Cllr Dragonetti Report
Report to Whitchurch Parish Council October 2020
Council Operations**

The government seems to have realised that some Covid related actions could be better handled at a more local level, and so the District Council is taking over from the County Council the task of distributing food as required to people who need it through lock down.

It has just been announced that the plan for new Council offices at Crowmarsh has been reconsidered in the light of most of the Councils officers working at home, and so the new plan is to build a smaller office on land the SODC already owns in the centre of Didcot near the station, currently a car park. I was always in favour of using this location, as it much more accessible by public transport, and, although further from some parts of the South Oxfordshire District, it is better located as an office for the Vale of White Horse, the authority with whom we share many functions and officers.

The District Council is continuing to take previously outsourced functions back in house; currently in progress is grounds maintenance . In addition to some open spaces, SODC is also responsible for two cemeteries, one of which is a small one in Kidmore End. Having this work in house means that the workforce can be flexibly directed to tackle what would have been “out of contract” tasks.

The Council is also exploring the option of creating a “delivery vehicle”, in other words a separate legal entity, with the aim of providing low cost housing in the District. I should point out the term “affordable” in housing terms can mean different things according to context.

Corporate Plan

The draft corporate plan went out to consultation , and had a great response with over 930 people giving their feedback on the six themes they were asked to comment on

The themes were:

- Providing the homes people need.
- Improving health and jobs.
- Dealing with the climate emergency.
- Looking after wildlife and the countryside.
- Looking after our money properly.
- Involving everyone.

Covid Update

People who are told to self isolate by NHS Track and Trace could be eligible for a £500 grant for financial support – but this is only available if you are self employed or employed, unable to work from home, losing income through self isolating and receiving one or more of a range of benefits. Not available if you are just quarantining after returning from abroad or on furlough. The application process should be open by 12 October. More details in due course on the SODC website.

There are currently about 6 new cases a day in South Oxfordshire, and I understand these are not local to us.

Local Plan 2035 (was 2034)

There is now a consultation on the Main Modifications to the plan which have been prepared by SODC at the direction of the Inspector. I will be putting in some comments to address minor issues that I am still concerned with, and which could be useful in planning issues.

Civil Parking Enforcement

The taking over of this responsibility from the Police is progressing, and is expected to become effective November next year. I will circulate a briefing paper once I have confirmed that it is not confidential.

Peter Dragonetti

Attachment 2 – Village Green Update – Cllrs Ferguson and Steward

Village Green Security:

Today we met with the Oxfordshire traveller & gypsy service advisor who came to view the village green and offer his advice on measures we should take to improve security. His overall recommendation was to simply reinforce the current gate (by the car park) by changing the padlock, doing some spot welding and putting washers on, and did not consider it necessary for other measures to be taken. Couple of observations he made:

- He considered the village green quite secure. The gate by the car park and the existing poles by the gate are strong and good quality. The holly bushes around it are a good natural security measure. The gate can be reinforced with the measures described above. He would not change anything else.

- He did not recommend retractable poles as additional security measures to reinforce the metal gate by the car park. According to him, the measures he described are equally effective as preventative deterrent measures, but a lot cheaper and also more convenient for users who need to access the VG with their vehicles for legitimate purposes. He said that ultimately, if anyone wants to get through, they will find a way and therefore we are better off taking cost effective deterrent measures.

- According to him, it is very unlikely that travellers would try to enter the green through the muddy lane entrance and the current narrow path leading to the football goals (opposite of allotment) which is just wide enough for a vehicle to push through. This is due to vegetation, trees, overhang which would likely cause damage to a caravan. Travellers are protective of their caravans and have little incentive to push through a narrow gap which may cause damage to all their caravans. No action suggested for muddy lane end. (we may want to consider increasing the vegetation further in that spot).

- In general, he considered the VG at low risk due to the history of travellers not having used the field.

Apparently, travellers are prone to use locations which have a historical link to their traditions and past events which our VG lacks reducing the interest in our village green. Also, the lack of amenities in our village, and the distance to shops etc lowers the risk for us.

- ACTION: recommended action is to purchase the recommended padlock, and Jon has offered to put on the washers and do the small amount of welding required.

CCTV:

I spoke with the allotment society regarding their monitoring equipment. They have two battery operated movement triggered devices which have an SD card inside to record images taken. They have a person who is responsible for occasionally changing batteries and making sure the SD card has space, but the Chair was not sure if that is being done on such a regular basis as the system mostly functions for deterrent purposes. They have not had any incidents since putting up the system. I can look into further to see if something similar could work for us as a very temporary measure despite the limitations such a system has in non-restricted public places and it not being recommended by the providers we talked to. For now we should keep monitoring the glass situation.

Sign:

I will circulate the designs received. Discussions on exact location to put them in the VG are on-going. I will organise to meet up with reps of the VG working committee to review location suggestions.

Kind regards,

Hanna