



MINUTES OF MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL
At the Village Hall at 20:00 Thursday, October 13, 2022

Members Present

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

Officers Present:

Clerk, RFO	Jane Yamamoto
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Public and Press: 2 residents

The meeting started at 20:00.

- 1 **Apologies for absence & Mission Statement** 20:05
Cllr Dragonetti provided his apologies. Cllrs Higley and O’Grady sent apologies for their lateness.
- 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 wishing to make any comments.
- 4 **Chairman’s Announcements** 20:10
The Walled Garden on the High Street – I received a phone call from the owner of The Walled Garden. I requested that Cllr O’Grady and I meet them on site to discuss the situation, but they did not want to do this. During our conversation:
 - They assured me that they will definitely not be making any more changes to the pond now that they know it is illegal. They were told by SODC very strictly that they were not allowed to make any changes without planning approval.
 - They are considering whether they will move in with their family but have not decided yet.
 - They will likely prepare plans to replace the house with a single dwelling, but may look at other options for building more than one house if this isn’t approved, although I’m not sure why this would get approval if the single house doesn’t.
 - They did not give any explanation of what happened recently with water flowing through the wall, but asked that we contact them about any questions in the future instead of raising issues to SODC in the first instance. I now have their contact details.

PC-Action 190: Cllr Donahue to review agreed actions with SODC and drainage engineer for addressing changes to the pond at The Walled Garden.

Village Green improvements – A £1,500 grant has been received from OCC to support improvements to the fence. This money needs to be spent by the end of March 2023. I will let the owners of the paddock know that the money is available and the PC can provide it to them subject to completion of work to improve the fence and PC agreement with the design.

Residents Issues:

- **Security at Eastfield House** – Some residents have been raising concerns about security of site with a number of breakings occurring with youth seen trespassing on a number of occasions. It appears that Majesticare is still responsible for the building, despite the company Urban Village Group making a planning application recently. Majesticare have assured the resident that they are taking the required measures.

5 To approve minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council meeting of September 8, 2022 and October 3, 2022.

Resolution: The Council voted to approve both sets of the minutes.

6 Planning Applications – to discuss and agree Council’s response to the following: 20:15

6.1 P22/S3223/FUL

Technology Centre, Bozedown Drive, Whitchurch Hill RG8 7QR

The demolition of buildings; the erection of a new part single storey, part two storey building for the research/testing of electric battery technology and associated test chambers; and the erection of buildings and compound for storage and other ancillary facilities

Resolution: The Council voted to submit comments to request the review of the lighting report, the comments from the Forestry officer and to ensure that during decommissioning of the site, the land is remediated to remove any contaminants.

6.2 P22/S3331/LDE

Lower Hitch, Whitchurch Hill RG8 7NU

Use of land as a camping site for the siting of a safari tent under the provisions of Paragraph 6 of the Public Health Act 1936. We are members of Freedom Camping Club, an exempt recreational origination, and currently hold an exemption certificate from the club authorising the use of land as a campsite without the need for a license.

Resolution: As this is not a formal planning application, the Council was not allowed to submit comments.

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

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

7.2 SODC County Councillors Reports – Cllr Bulmer (Attachment 2)

8 **Finance:** 20:25

8.1 To approve the payment schedule for October:

Payment	Amount
Staff expenditure (October 2022)	£471.80
Cllr Donahue (lock for Village Green)	£35.20
Scofell (October Invoice)	£720.24
RoSPA (Checklist for Playground)	£36.00 BACS
Ian Hogg (laurel bush)	£400 BACS
Moore (External Audit)	£240
Herald Graphics (Autumn Bulletin)	TBC

	Resolution: The Council voted to approve the payments for October.	
8.2	External Audit (Report and Notice of Conclusion) Attachment 3 and 4	
8.3	Bank Reconciliations for April – September 2022	
9	Motion to approve legal costs for lease of second strip of land for Manor Road recreation facilities - Cllr Smith seconded by Cllr Donahue	20:30
	-Initial estimates from 3 quotes are £2,500 to prepare the lease and up to £2,000 for review of lease. Budget up to £5,000.	
9.1	Cllr Smith said that it is usually the landowner’s solicitor that reviews the lease. The costs are just estimates. As far as she sees, the landowner is happy for the PC to continue to use the land with equipment on it with their permission. She also recommended that a survey may be carried out on the land. Cllr Smith would keep all informed, especially Cllr Leadbeater-Hart.	
9.2	Cllr Donahue reassured the Council budgeted money will not be spent this year and thus could afford this expenditure.	
	Resolution: The Council voted to approve the Motion.	
10	Motion to appoint Jill Bradon as leader of Green Team – Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Smith	20:40
10.1	Cllr Donahue reminded that the Green Team works under the Parish Council and is not a Working Group, but a group of volunteers in the village. The only permanent member is technically the Green Team Chairman. The Chairman should still be approved by the PC as the vast majority of the work the Green Team does is on PC owned land and the Chairman will need to work closely with the PC for budget approval and many other matters.	
	Resolution: The Council voted to approve the motion.	
11	Motion to approve Heads of Terms of Agreement for Cricket Club– Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Smith	20:50
	Resolution: The council agreed that this motion is no longer relevant following the October 3, 2022 meeting. It was replaced by the Motion under item 13.	
12	Motion to approve expenditure for an additional sign for the Village Green adjoining the paddock (Attachment A) – Cllr Parkes seconded by Cllr Donahue	20:55
	Resolution: The Council voted to support the expenditure for Kingdom Signs to create the sign.	
13	Motion to engage solicitor to review legal status of Village Green buildings – Cllr Donahue seconded by Cllr Smith.	21:00
	-Budget up to £500 for review of relevant documents based on estimates received.	
	Resolution: The Council voted to approve the Motion.	
14	Review of log of Archived Documents at Village Hall (Attachment 5) - Clerk	21:05
14.1	The Clerk presented the list of Archived Documents located in the Village Hall. There were mostly financial audits and minutes, but also a Register of Interest for Councillors dating back to 1964. She would ask the Editors of the website to place this on the Village Website.	
15	Village Hall Update – Cllr Higley	21:10
15.1	Cllr Higley updated that the Village Hall was in a better financial position than it had been. The online booking system was beneficial to many and there are now a range of classes that take place on a regular basis, including the Bridge Club, Art classes and a new Theatre Group for children.	
16	To review progress on any open actions from previous Parish Council meetings and agree any revision of actions on the action list.	21:15
17	To confirm the date and time of the next meeting on Thursday, November 10, 2022 at 20:00.	
18	Confidential discussion for thank you notes from the Parish Council	
19	Meeting closed.	21:45

Attachment 1

Report to Whitchurch On Thames Parish Council October 2022 Councillor Grant Scheme

The deadline for this has passed, but there is another round of funding on its way. There is also the Capital Grant Scheme, where funding of up to £75,000 is available for projects that help improve people's quality of life, with a minimum of £1000 and up to 50% of total costs. Applications are open until midday of 21 October, information on the SODC website. <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/grants/>

Wallingford Riverside Pool

This facility has had a very successful year with the highest ever number of users with commensurate increase in income. With some excellent feedback from the public, there are plans for new initiatives next year.

Move to Abbey House, Abingdon

From this week, Abbey House in Abingdon is the new workplace for the majority of SODC staff though most will continue hybrid working. The new address is Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, OX14 3JE Full Council meetings will be held at Didcot Civic Hall while all other meetings will take place at the Microsoft Teams Meeting Room in Abbey House unless otherwise advised. This will finally mark the end of councillors and guests staring into their computer screens whilst sitting side by side in meetings! Residents and parish councils will be able to continue to participate in Planning Committee and other meetings remotely, ensuring we have the best of both worlds.

Business Rates – Treasury Outturn at Scrutiny

Following work by councillors, SODC commissioned external advisers to undertake a review of business rates premises in the district to identify any premises that should be paying business rates but were not on the rating list.

This exercise identified an additional £2.6m of business rates, all from larger businesses, including backdated amounts. The council's share of this is estimated to be in excess of £500,000 of which just under £200,000 will be ongoing increase, contributing to the council's revenue budget.

The advisers will be brought in periodically to review business rates premises and ensure businesses required to pay business rates are on the register.

Speeding on the A4074 and A4130

At the last meeting of the Police and Crime Panel on 23 September, South Oxfordshire's representative on the panel, Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye, asked Police and Crime Commissioner Matthew Barber why no action had been taken to address the persistent problem of speeding and noisy motorbikes on the A4074 between H café in Berinsfield and Crowmarsh roundabout and Crowmarsh roundabout and Henley. Cllr Casey-Rerhaye and a group of councillors representing the parishes affected have also written public letters to the PCC and the Police Commissioner to demand action on illegal speed and motorbike noise.

Social Housing in Wheatley

At its last meeting, cabinet considered an application for grant Funding by SOHA for the construction of new affordable homes in Wheatley, continuing the council's commitment to using developer funds to support the building of new zero-carbon social and affordable housing in the district. This follows SODC's contribution of £500,000 towards three new houses for social rent being developed by Henley Housing Trust, a scheme to deliver social housing in Thame and the council's own development of social housing on Didcot Broadway.

Grants

The Capital Grants scheme closes on October 21 while the second round of the Councillor Community Grants scheme opens in November. I have received a number of requests for advice on grants. If you would like to speak directly to an officer, please let me know so that I can put you in direct touch. The Grants team are excellent and very supportive and informative.

Tree Planting Season

As the tree planting season approaches and following the wishes of the King, the Queen's Green Canopy initiative will be extended to the end of March 2023 to give people the opportunity to plant trees in honour of Her late Majesty. We are creating a record of all the trees planted across the districts for the Queen's Green Canopy. Please send images of the trees you've planted to communications@southandvale.gov.uk
Greener Henley is planting trees and hedgerows again this year and is looking for landowners and parish councils who are willing to participate. Please contact Patrick Fleming for more information: flemings5@googlemail.com
They can provide trees and the people power to get large tracts of native hedgerow planted, all for free!

Investment Zones

The government has proposed that so-called "investment zones" will see the lifting of "burdensome requirements" such as local consultation and environmental regulations including in designated areas like AONBs, SSSIs and National Parks. Development in these zones will be additional to that already agreed in local plans.

A motion is coming to council, proposed by Cllr Robin Bennett, stating that South Oxfordshire is already a key contributor to the wider UK economy and that democratic local plans with proper environmental and landscape protections are the best way to continue this contribution, not through "investment zones" and the sweeping aside of environmental and planning protections and consultations.

Peter Dragonetti

Attachment 2

REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS OCTOBER 2022 FROM CLLR KEVIN BULMER GENERAL OCC REPORT

OCC SPENDS £30,000 ON 'SPACE INVADER'

This strange structure appeared in the car park in front of County Hall during August, taking up two valuable car parking spaces intended for visitors on county business. Apparently, it is a 'living wall' and the aim is to understand the impact of plants on air quality in the vicinity. It will stay in place for six months. The cost of the project to Council Tax payers is £30,000.



SECONDARY SCHOOL APPLICATION PROCESS OPENS IN OXFORDSHIRE

Parents and guardians can now apply for their Year 6 child to attend a secondary school for September 2023. Applications should be submitted online at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/secondaryadmissions

OCC is encouraging parents and guardians to list four preferences on their application. This doesn't make it less likely that their first preference will be offered. But it does reduce the risk of all preferences being unsuccessful and children being allocated a place at a school that is not named on their list. The deadline for completed applications is 31 October 2022. Parents and guardians will then be contacted with the result to their application on national offer day, 1 March 2023. It is important to apply on time. Late applications will be processed later in the year and are far less likely to secure places at preferred schools.

TRAFFIC FILTER PLAN TO SPLIT OXFORD INTO FOUR SECTORS

Further measures to restrict car use in Oxford are out for consultation. 'Traffic filters' are to be introduced with the intention of creating four 'Sectors' within the city: North, South, West and East. When the traffic filters are operating, for cars without a permit, movement within each sector is unrestricted, but direct movement between sectors is not possible and requires use of the ring road. For example:

- County Hall, Westgate and Oxford station (all in West) will only be accessible via Botley Road, so if you were coming from North, East or South you would need to go via the A34 ring road and then Botley Road
- The area around St Giles & Gloucester Green will only be accessible via Banbury or Woodstock Road

Affected motorists will face much longer journey times and distances. The intention is to force a change in behaviour. The original project description of 'sectorisation' has been dropped as it is felt that 'traffic filters' is a far less controversial term. Leading traders' organisation Oxford Business Action Group has slammed the proposals saying in the Oxford Mail: "We are concerned that in their current design, the introduction of these six traffic filters will negatively impact many businesses, causing closure for many and catastrophically damaging countless others."

A423 KENNINGTON BRIDGE REPAIRS

The project will see the replacement of the existing Kennington rail bridge structure, allowing for a new eastbound bus lane and a shared use path on the north side for cycling and walking. It will also enable flood alleviation for the area as part of the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme (OFAS), to be delivered by the Environment Agency. Construction is expected to take place between late 2023 and 2026, with the bridge never being fully closed to traffic but being replaced one half at a time. Conservatives are asking about the combined impact of these proposed repairs and the traffic filter restrictions.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST OCC UP BY 60%

OCC was the subject of dozens of complaints and enquiries to the ombudsman about its actions last year, new figures show. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman is responsible for investigating wrongdoing in local public services. If it finds that the council has acted in an unfair or unjust way, the ombudsman will offer recommendations on how to make things right. According to figures from the body, there were 64 complaints or enquiries made about OCC in the year to March – up from 40 the year before, a 60% increase since the new administration took over.

SEPTEMBER FULL COUNCIL MEETING DEFERRED UNTIL 7 OCTOBER

Due to the period of mourning, the September meeting of Full Council was deferred until 7 October with no change to the business to be considered.

LIBDEMS ATTEMPT TO MOVE A MOTION TO CUT VAT

The LibDems put forward a motion to Full Council in July stating Government should immediately introduce various subsidies and cut VAT to 17.5%. The motion was not debated due to lack of time, but is coming back to Full Council at the October meeting. Conservatives have pointed out that whatever the merits or not of the proposal, the administration is once again wasting council resources trying to get involved in central government issues way beyond the council's remit. Councillors are not junior MPs and they should focus on local matters. It is believed the motion has been centrally generated by LibDem HQ as almost identically worded motions have been debated at other LibDem councils.

LIBDEM/GREEN/LABOUR ADMINISTRATION RAMPS UP VEGANISM CAMPAIGN

The administration continues to push its vegan agenda. A new website promoted by Oxfordshire councils called Climate Action Oxfordshire features links to the Vegan Society. Pressure group the Countryside Alliance has responded by stating that the vegan policies which OCC has adopted should be dropped because they undermine British farmers. It argues that in order to make an environmental choice, it is more important for consumers to know where food comes from and how it is produced. At the OCC Full Council meeting in October, Conservatives will again try to reverse the imposition of vegan meals at council meetings. Conservative Councillor Yvonne Constance will ask members to reinstate meat and dairy on to the menu and to support local producers. She will move that: "This Council resolves to offer locally produced menus at Council-catered events, including meat, dairy and vegan options, or to make alternative provisions for members, staff and attendees to facilitate personal choice." Cllr David Bartholomew, who is seconding the motion, will say: "We are not opposed to vegan food, but we want to serve local food rather than flying in mangoes from abroad. And we want there to be a choice. It is not right to impose ideological dietary opinions on others."

CONTACT DETAILS

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

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Twitter: [KevinBulmer@bulmer_kevin](https://twitter.com/bulmer_kevin)



Attachment A

**Kingdom
Signs - Sales**

Sep 22, 2022, 11:26 AM (6 days ago)

to me

Hi Frances,

Please see below for the quote you requested:

Shaped Aluminium Sign with channel to reverse
700mm x 500mm Landscape
Round 50mm aluminium posts @ 1500mm long
2 off
Post caps
Fixings
All Powder coated to green (RAL to be confirmed)
Printed vinyl to face, gloss laminated.
£423.64 + VAT
Delivery £18.00 + VAT

If required
Installation £495.00 + VAT

Attachment 5

Village Hall Archived Files as at October 1, 2022

First Cabinet - top

PC info and records 2015-2016
Village hall 2019
PC 2018-2019
PC Accounts 2016-2017
PC Accounts 2017-2018
Village Hall Accounts 2015-2018
PC Playground 2013
Polish Church 2019
Village Hall Insurance 2018-2019

Second Cabinet

PC Minutes 2008-2014
Playground 1996-2005
Playground 1996-2005
Declaration of Acceptance of Office 1964-1997
PC Audit 2016-2017
PC Audit 2016-2017
PC Audit 2017-2018
PC Audit 2015-2016

PC Audit 2013-2014

Planning Application and Plans including Eastfield House and Whitchurch Bridge 2018-2020
Village Green Land Registry Documents *
Whitchurch Village Plan 2008
Village Green Maintenance 2015

Third Cabinet

Declaration of Acceptance of Office 2007-2008
Whitchurch Village Info Panel
Toll Bridge 2008-2009
First Aid Kit
Whitchurch-on-Thames Appraisal 1993
The Whitchurch Village Plan 2008-2009
Approach to Whitchurch-on-Thames Toll Bridge 1993
Whitchurch Bridge Toll 2009
Whitchurch Toll Bridge 1992
Communications Between Planning and PC for Land Adjoining Eastfield Lane, Laying out of new Village Cricket Recreational Grounds and 10 Dwellings 1997*

Fourth Cabinet

Village Hall Minutes and Accounts 2019
PC Accounts 2014-2015
PC Accounts 2006-2007 2007-2008 2008-2009 2009-2010 2010-2011
PC Accounts 2015-2016
PC Accounts 2013-2014
PC Accounts 2011-2012 2012-2013
Local Plan 2011
Corporate Strategy and Maps 2012

*13th October - Cllr Parkes took these files for review