

BINFIELD HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Binfield Heath Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 28th February at 7.00pm in the Palmer Room at Dunsden Hall

Meeting of the Recreation Ground Charities & Allotment for the Labouring Poor Charity

004/22 Allotments The Clerk will chase the 2 remaining rents overdue. **(Clerk to action)**

005/22 Recreation Ground

005.01/21 Regular inspections have taken place.

005.02/21 The Clerk will ascertain a provisional date for the play equipment repairs. **(Clerk to action)**. Success of an application for a grant towards the repairs from the Councillors' grant is awaited.

006/22 Public Forum No questions

The meeting of the Parish Council

Present Cllr P Rollason, Cllr L Ransom, Cllr S Summerland, Cllr H Lacey, Cllr Sarah Fulton-Urry, Cllr R. Davis, Cllr D Bartholomew (OCC, SODC), Cllr L Rawlins (SODC), two members of the public.

019/22 Apologies None

020/22 Declarations of Interest None

021/22 Minutes of the meetings held on Monday January 24th 2022. Cllr Ransom proposed the minutes were accepted as a true record. This was seconded by Cllr Summerland. All agreed.

022/22 Matters Arising

013.22 The Phillimore Estate has laid bark to improve the poor state of the ground at the entrance to Barns Car Park.

023/22 County Councillor's report Cllr Bartholomew briefly discussed local matters. His full report is attached to the minutes.

024/22 District Councillor's report Cllr Rawlins had sent his report. His full report is attached to these minutes.

025/22 Public Forum No questions at this point.

026/22 Financial Situation

026.01/21 The financial position had been circulated. An error in the January accounts had been corrected and the correction was signed by the Chairman.

026.02/21 The February accounts were presented. Invoices to the value of £4,910.76 were authorised for payment. These payments were proposed by Cllr Ransom and seconded by Cllr Lacey. All agreed. **(Clerk to action)**

027/22 Planning Matters. Cllr Ransom attended the meeting run by the Enforcement team. She reported that it was well presented and informative.

Applications GRANTED by SODC

COMPLETED Applications for Ratification

NEW Applications for Discussion (10mins)

028/22 Neighbourhood Plan Cllr Davis updated the PC on progress: The second Groundwork grant has been paid. The history of the parish has been researched, the landscape character assessment is being undertaken, draft design guides are being reviewed and residents have been updated. All information will be placed on display boards to share with the parish at the Annual Parish Meeting in May. Large posters will advertise the event.

029/22 Community Matters

029.01/22 Defibrillator This has been purchased by the PC and 'Millie's Dream' is investigating the delay in the delivery.

030/22 Highways/Transport and General Maintenance

030.01/22 The white lines at the road junctions close to the Bottle and Glass Public house are disappearing and need replacing. Photos are to be taken and this will be reported. **(Chairman & Clerk to action)**

030.02/22 The fence along Arch Hill was damaged by the recent gale. Quotations have been

sought and these were discussed. It was decided that only the length of fence that had fallen would be replaced with matching materials. An amended invoice to this effect will be requested.

(Chairman to action) A further quotation for the removal of two fallen trees was accepted. All agreed.

031/22 Green & Open Spaces See **Matters Arising** above

032/22 Website Compliance Cllr Ransom has looked at the website compliance information and it is being addressed. She is talking to residents in the village. The Clerk will ask the EDPC Chairman about progress on its website. **(Clerk to action)**

033/22 Neighbourhood Watch Nothing to report.

034/22 Platinum Jubilee The Village Society are planning a Big Lunch on Sunday 5th June. EDPC are hoping to set up a beacon. A flagpole in Binfield Heath is being considered. The Clerk was asked to find out the cost of a possible purchase and installation. **(Clerk to action)**

035/22 Consultations 1. The Clerk will look at the CIL consultation and advise Councillors about a possible response. **(Clerk to action)**

2. It was decided that the PC will not make a response to the Joint Design Guide.

036/22 Matters for future consideration Tree planting; Henley Bridge

The meeting finished at 9.07 pm.

Date of next meeting: Monday March 28th 2022

REPORT TO BINFIELD HEATH PARISH COUNCIL FEB 2022 FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW GENERAL OCC REPORT

BUDGET

As previously reported, the administration is proposing a large 5% rise in Council Tax. This is disappointing as the previous Conservative-led administration had put in place a Financial Strategy featuring a maximum of a 4% increase in Council Tax for 22/23. The budget includes a large £88m borrowing programme which will cost the council £5.3m a year to service, equivalent to 1.3% of Council Tax receipts. The Budget goes to Full Council for approval on 8th February.

OCC AND CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL TO END FORMAL PARTNERSHIP

The Leader issued an email to all councillors on 18th January, praising the partnership between OCC and Cherwell District Council but also announcing subject to council approval, it was going to end – without giving a reason why. The arrangement between the two councils, which has taken the form of joint services under a single chief executive, has been in place since September 2018. The ending of the partnership would mean that joint chief executive Yvonne Rees will return to her substantive post as CEO for Cherwell District Council from the date of both full council decisions. Recruitment will take place for the post of chief executive for OCC. The costs to the council have not been published, nor the reasons behind the decision made clear. Joint services would remain in place while new arrangements are finalised.

FOCUS ON CITY OF OXFORD & ENVIRONS

A number of measures focusing on the city of Oxford and the immediate area have been announced. These include: Oxford Quickway cycle routes; Face-to-face customer services moving to Westgate library; Cycling and walking improvements for Kidlington; Consultation on Oxford United's request for council land near Kidlington; Work to improve Marsh Lane in Oxford; East Oxford Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs); LTN enforcement cameras in Cowley; Oxford Zero Emission Zone (ZEX).

OXFORD TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT SPY CAMERAS

OCC's Cabinet has voted to apply to the government for permission to use spy cameras to

enforce traffic regulations in Oxford, including stopping in yellow box junctions, illegal turns, and vehicle restrictions, at specific sites. The first proposed locations are: Oriel Square, Cornmarket Street, Turl Street, Broad Street, High Street, Barton Park, Holywell Street /Longwall Street, New College Lane/Queens Lane, Gloucester Street, Botley Interchange, Hinksey Hill Interchange. Fines will be retained by OCC.

WALLINGFORD CENTRAL BECOMES LATEST 20MPH PILOT SITE

Wallingford Central has become the third 20mph pilot scheme to be unveiled in Oxfordshire.

OCC completed the work earlier this month as part of its £8m plans to reduce the speed of the majority of the county's 30mph roads to 20mph, where suitable and when supported by local residents. It followed the installation of 20mph pilot schemes in Cuxham and Long Wittenham in 2021, with more pilot sites planned for Wallingford North and Kirtlington later this year. Through the Localities Group of local councillors, I have asked for clarity about how the success/failure of these pilot schemes will be measured. In particular, I have asked if speed surveys are being undertaken before and after their introduction. It must be remembered that compliance by motorists is effectively voluntary as it will not be enforced by the police.

SPECIFIC OCC REPORT FOR BINFIELD HEATH

COUNCILLOR PRIORITY FUND

I have a small amount of funding still available and would be please to consider match-funding any Highways projects the PC may wish to action, up to a total cost of £2000 (i.e. £1000 each).

GENERAL SODC REPORT

COMMUNITY GRANT

Cllr Rawlins and I have been cooperating to issue our joint £10k fund across the ward and the funds have now all been allocated.

BUDGET

The Conservative Opposition voted against the LibDem/Green Budget at the Full Council meeting on February 17th. One major objection was the self-indulgent plans to build a showcase new HQ in Didcot when existing council buildings in the county could be re-purposed. The new building will require substantial borrowing and the demand for the surplus space planned for letting is highly uncertain.

SPECIFIC SODC REPORT FOR BINFIELD HEATH

[P22/S0705/FUL](#) HIGHWALL HOUSE SHIPLAKE ROW BINFIELD HEATH RG9 4DP

An application for a variation of conditions and minor amendments has been submitted.

P21/S4102/RM: RETIREMENT VILLAGE RESERVED MATTERS

The officer recommended approval of the application, which was determined at the SODC Planning Committee meeting on Tuesday 22nd February when the committee accepted the recommendation. I spoke against approval, and while most committee members agreed with everything I said, they felt the risks of an appeal were too high. I would like to thank Cllr Rawlins for his support and for agreeing to waive his right to speak to give me the full five minutes.

SODC ward councillor's report Binfield Heath **– 28th February 2022**

Covid-19

Following the national pattern Covid cases have fallen back somewhat. At 20/02/2022, Oxford City was at a weekly rate of 612 per 100k population (it peaked at 1,504 on 6th Jan.). By comparison, Cherwell DC was 666 (peak was 18,826 on 3rd Jan.), West Oxon DC at 582 (peak was 1,565 on 3rd Jan.), SODC at 544 (peak was 1,522 on 3rd Jan.) and Vale of WH DC at 583 (peak was 1,565 on 3rd Jan.). Reading BC (to 8th February 2022) was at 553 (having peaked at 1,780 on 4th Jan.). These levels are much down from peak, but remain moderately high; by way of comparison at 4th November SODC was at 363 and by the 3rd December was at 764 – now at 20th February at 544 weekly per 100k of population. That said, they have been falling and incidences are mostly mild for those with boosted vaccinations and those with antibodies. It is clear that the vaccinations and natural antibodies are reducing the hospitalisation rate and death rate of Omicron. Happily hospitalisations have fallen back quite a lot, but are still significant at a time when the NHS faces strong demand from the previous backlog of conditions and other seasonal pressures.

The government has now withdrawn legal restrictions - except the requirement to isolate. Government had now amended the requirement to self-isolate with a positive Covid test to be only be 5 days – subject to clear LFT tests on days 5 and 6 (in advance of re-emerging). However from 24th February there is no longer any legal requirement to self-isolate at all and the Test-and-Trace system is ending. From the 1st April free tests will no longer be provided except in special cases such as care-home settings and the over 75s/those with medical vulnerabilities. Some transport operators and businesses still require use of masks. Boosters and vaccinations continue. Whatever the rules may be, the advice must still be to proceed with some caution and to protect the more vulnerable.

Climate Action Plan SODC has adopted its first Climate Action Plan. The plan is intended to be a living and evolving one. It focuses on the actions that the council can take directly, but also on encouraging and enabling action by residents and others.

SODC Budget As noted previously, a host of poor decisions in the past had eroded SODC's reserves by many millions of pounds and built an ongoing annual deficit that was set to grow to the point that usable revenue reserves would have been exhausted. It was also the case that the Crowmarsh fire of January 2015 created new capital and revenue pressures – without a sufficiently swift response. Since 2019 a series of steps have been taken to seek to improve matters and to restore a philosophy plus an action programme towards sound finance. In 2019/20 the forecast for 2023/24 was for a deficit of £(6.1)m closing General revenue reserves of £4.0m (less than a year's worth) and an empty capital receipts reserve (forcing routine capital renewal to fall against the inadequate revenue reserve. (SODC did of course hold other funds for example as earmarked for CIL/s106 projects etc). This was not a good situation. The programme of action has of course been somewhat disrupted by the impact of Covid. However the draft 2022/23 budget forecast for 2023/24 is for a deficit of £(1.8)m and a revenue reserve of £23.8m. Unfortunately because it has the 8th lowest Band D Council Tax charge for a Shire District in England (despite being in the expensive South East) SODC incurs more cost than income for extra dwellings (and associated population); albeit that this effect is temporarily offset by "New Homes Bonus" (NHB) – which is overtly subject to a government review. So, this effect increases net costs over time; together with the propensity for government to impose ever more statutory obligations and associated costs. This year the draft 2022-23 budget forecasts a deficit of £(3.0)m for 2026-27, closing that year with £18.4m of General revenue reserves and also £4.3m of capital receipts reserve. The budget includes appropriate increases in charges and fees and curtailment of expenditure. Much of the benefits come from the sound decisions that have been made.

These include the costs-saving of a JLP, correcting some outsourcing problems and investing in assets that save costs. The budget provides an outline envelope to address SODC's office problem after the Crowmarsh fire and thus reduce the deficit effect from the use of the temporary and highly expensive Milton Park offices. Using savings the budget also provides for a programme of action in the wake of Covid delays and impacts. Community well-being, deep cleans, litter and children's activity. Tree planting and supporting the nature of our district. Climate change support for skills and initiatives. All directed to the high value of our district in what will of course be the Jubilee year. The government have further deferred a promised "Fair Funding Framework" whereby Local Government can plan ahead for their finances with less uncertainty. There are risks that reviews of funding may cut the levels of central government grant and NHB to councils like SODC in favour of "levelling up" and deprivation. If so they would cause difficulties for the council. The draft budget proposes an increase of £5 for a Band D property – in line with government guidance. Clearly SODC continues to run a deficit in the draft budget – but a much reduced one. There is more to do in the future but there is also a clear direction of travel towards a return to sound finance. The budget was approved by full council on 17th February.

Planning Enforcement On Wednesday 26th January a presentation meeting was held for Towns and Parishes on Enforcement. The feedback I have heard was excellent. After all the debate some of the attendees were a bit sceptical going into the session, but came out impressed and feeling that the proposed approach was correct and positive. Lis Ransome attended from Binfield Heath. She was kind enough to write to say how pleased she was with the session. She felt that the original communication could have been better but that "When properly explained by Anne and Emma it came across quite differently, a logical triage approach." (Emma Turner and Anne-Marie Simpson).

Grants Binfield Heath's bid for the councillor grants has been submitted and is well on its way to approval- supported by David and me.

Leigh Rawlins
District Councillor