

BINFIELD HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Binfield Heath Parish Council Meeting held on Monday February 22nd 2021 at 6.30pm by Zoom

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

04/21 Recreation Ground The monthly inspection will be carried out.

05/21 Allotments Nothing to report.

06/21 Public Forum No public 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 D Bartholomew (OCC), Cllr L Rawlins (SODC), four members of the public and Dr Jo Barton to discuss a defibrillator for Binfield Heath

The Chairman welcomed Dr Barton and the residents present to the meeting.

018/21 Apologies Cllr K Maher

019/21 A defibrillator Dr Barton explained the advantages of having a defibrillator in the village. The main reason would be that an ambulance might take between 12 and 14 minutes to reach a victim in Binfield Heath and might be too late. Discussion took place about the time it took to get the defibrillator to the patient. Dr Barton thought that could be a much shorter time. The defibrillators are now simpler with easier to use instructions and are available more cheaply. There is also the chance of some part funding from the British Heart Foundation. The Clerk was asked to investigate the possibility of a purchase. **(Clerk to action)**

020/21 Declarations of Interest Cllr Rollason declared a prejudicial interest in a planning application for Little Crwys Cottage as he is a direct neighbour. Cllr Ransom declared a prejudicial interest in the Elm Cottage application as the applicant is a relative.

021/21 Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 25th January 2021. Cllr Ransom proposed the minutes were accepted as a true record. This was seconded by Cllr Fulton-Urry. All agreed.

022/21 Matters Arising None

023/21 County Councillor's report Cllr Bartholomew's full report is attached to the minutes. On some local matters he mentioned the recent undecipherable map of areas of land covered by footpaths owned by the Phillimore Settlement. The Clerk was asked to complain about the map. **(Clerk to action)**. Cllr Bartholomew also mentioned the cable laying from Mill Lane Shiplake up to the Primary School. He has also requested that the street lights outside the Thames Farm site be turned off until building commences.

024/21 District Councillor's report Cllr Rawlins introduced his report. His full report is attached to these minutes. Cllr Ransom requested a budget from SODC for regular litter clearing along all highways that cannot be carried out by volunteers.

025/21 Public Forum

025.01/21 A resident had suggested that the bottom of Arch Hill area along the River Binn could be cleared and tidied to enhance that entrance to the village. **(see 031/21)**

025.02/21 A student from the village who attends Gillotts School has asked if he is able to undertake 3 months of some community work to go towards his bronze Duke of Edinburgh's award. This was discussed and clearing the litter in the Recreation Ground will be suggested. The student will be sent a litter risk assessment as a volunteer. **(Clerk to action)**

025.03/21 A resident has been collecting litter from the footpaths when walking. She had collected so much that her dustbin was overflowing. The Clerk thanked the resident and suggested collecting a bag from the shop and putting it for collection on Arch Hill on a Thursday evening.

026/21 Neighbourhood Plan The Parish Council is aware that the idea of a Neighbourhood Plan has been discussed for the last two years and then last year when it was hoped to move forward Covid 19 prevented holding a public meeting. Another way to engage interest from the residents was sought and Cllr Ransom had produced a short communication to residents for this purpose. The residents present discussed the need to pursue the idea and a possible Steering Group was

discussed. In the absence of Cllr Maher who hoped to take this on originally, it was decided that the Chairman and Vice Chair would be members at the initial stage with support from other PC members. It was agreed that the short communication was to be shared with Councillors and those residents present and hopefully distributed with the next month. Cllr Rawlins added some advice about the process and the fact that grants were available. The Clerk was asked to let SODC know that the intended boundaries of the Neighbourhood Plan would be the parish boundaries and that the qualifying body would be the Parish Council.

027/21 Financial Situation

027.01/21 The financial position was circulated.

027.02/21 The February accounts were presented. Invoices to the value of £3,688.35 were authorised for payment by BACS. These payments were proposed by Cllr Rollason and seconded by Cllr Summerland. All agreed. **(Clerk to action)**

027.03/21 Councillor expenses. None this month

027.04/21 Insurance renewal. Insurance for Keeps Well has come under discussion but as the well or the land it stands on is not owned by the PC it is not in a position to cover the insurance. The owners of the land will be notified of the position. **(Clerk to action)**

028/21 Planning Matters

New Applications

P21/SO202/HH Erection of single storey wrap-around rear extension with lantern rooflight and skylights. Little Crwys Cottage 8 Heathfield Avenue Binfield Heath RG9 4ED Paul Rollason left the meeting while this was discussed. A working party had recommended this for approval but added a comment regarding the party wall. The Chairman returned to the meeting.

P21/SO250/FUL Subdivision of Cottage into 2 self contained 4-bedroom villas with extensions and alterations. Elm Cottage Binfield Heath RG9 4LE Cllr Ransom left the meeting at this time. This was discussed and it was decided that the application would be recommended for approval with a comment about car parking. **(Clerk to action)** Cllr Ransom returned to the meeting.

Applications Granted

029/21 Community Matters It was decided that due to a legal issue the Parish Council was unable to make a money donation to the Shiplake school. The school will be advised accordingly. **(Clerk to action)**

030/21 Highways/Transport and General Maintenance Nothing to report

031/21 Green & Open Spaces An application has been made to the SODC Councillors for a grant to clear and develop the area around the River Binn at the bottom of Arch Hill.

032/21. Neighbourhood Watch Nothing to report as Cllr Maher was unable to attend the meeting.

033/21 Website Compliance The website needs to become compliant with regulations. Mark Dodson feels that it might be quicker to find another way to do this. David Woodward has offered his services and this will be accepted. The clerk will thank Mark Dodson for his website support over the last few years **(Clerk to action)**

034/21 Matters for future consideration Drain Clearance; Neighbourhood Plan; defibrillator.

The meeting finished at 8.37pm

Date of next meeting: Monday March 22nd 2021

**REPORT TO BINFIELD HEATH PARISH COUNCIL FEB 2021
FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW**

GENERAL OCC REPORT

This month I focus entirely on the County Budget proposals for 2021/22

FRONTLINE SERVICES GIVEN PROTECTION WITH NEW INVESTMENTS

Frontline services are being given high levels of protection and new investment as part of OCC's budget proposals for 2021/22. This includes a proposed 1.99% rise in basic council tax rise, plus an extra 1% specifically for adult social care, making a total of 2.99%.

The council's Cabinet met on 19 January and formally proposed the budget ahead of the annual meeting of all 63 county councillors on 9 February when the budget will be agreed and set.

Next year and beyond, the council is committing to strengthening its approach towards climate action, an enhanced focus on addressing inequality, developing its youth offer and delivering its COVID-19 recovery strategy.

A total of £19.6m of savings are being proposed in total across all services. £14.6m of these savings were already planned and are centred on the transformation of services to make them more efficient while protecting the frontline.

The council is also dedicated to investing in services that will have positive long-term impact for local communities. The budget proposals reflect this with more than £25m of additional funding included. Some of this funding has been previously agreed but £9.5m of this is newly proposed for 2021/22 to help meet additional demands, including within adult social care.

New investments

Each year as part of its budget process the council identifies any new pressures that need to be funded and new priorities. The council needs to meet annual inflation costs and plan for the increase in demand for adult social care due to continued rises in life expectancy and long-term population growth. Proposed investments include:

- A total of £1m long-term funding would be invested in expanding the youth offer in Oxfordshire. A study is due to report in the Spring on the needs of young people and how the wider partnership of the voluntary, community and public services can best provide support. An additional £500,000 of one-off accelerator funding will also be provided to develop sustainable long term approaches and help tackle the impacts of the pandemic on young people.
- An extra £4m will be added to the adult social care budget for 2021/22. This includes a total of £1.35m for managing risks such as provider sustainability.
- The Better Care Fund (BCF) is a programme spanning both the NHS and local government. It seeks to join up health and care services so that people can manage their own health and wellbeing and live independently in their communities for as long as possible. For 2020/21, the county council agreed with health partners that £1.2m of the improved BCF for Oxfordshire would be used to support activities agreed to deliver better outcomes over the winter period in the county. However, it was one-off funding. The council is proposing to continue the funding for 2021/22, which would be used to support measures to help people be discharged from hospital and enable new ways of working and better outcomes for residents.
- The number of adults of working age with physical disabilities has increased in 2020/21 and there are forecast overspends for both care at home and for residential care. While this is being managed within pooled resources between the NHS and council in 2020/21, it is not anticipated that this can

be maintained in the longer run. Pending a review of the needs and activity for these service users, £750,000 has been proposed to support expenditure on assessed care needs from 2021/22.

- OCC has been part of a joint partnership to procure and manage services for single homeless people in Oxfordshire since it was formed in 2017. A further one-off contribution to the partnership of £500,000 was included in the budget, with £250,000 of this allocated for 2020/21 and the same in 2021/22. The council is proposing to continue the council's support for the partnership from 2022/23.
- During the period of the pandemic, more people have chosen to take up drugs and alcohol residential rehabilitation services and this has led to the council proposal to put £50,000 more into existing services.
- An extra £400,000 is proposed for highway maintenance focused on additional resource for vegetation and drainage clearance plus supporting the roll out of a trial currently being undertaken enabling parish councils to implement 20mph schemes in their villages.
- A £300,000 fund to support innovative community-developed projects and activities that improve people's health and wellbeing in Oxfordshire is proposed. A total of £150,000 of this will be new funding and £150,000 will come from existing public health budgets.
- An extra £330,000 will be invested into children's services on increasing early intervention services, increasing the skill base of children's social care workers and special educational needs related services.
- A total of £100,000 would be invested in issues linked to digital exclusion.
- A total of £81,000 would be invested in domestic violence services and £150,000 into apprenticeships.

Proposed savings

Some of the proposed savings at the start of this year's budget are listed below. The council does not set its final budget until February 2021. These proposals may change once further financial information is received from the government and consultation responses from the public have been considered.

- The council proposes to carry out more checks to make sure companies who have been granted permits to carry out roadworks finish on time. This will ensure that late finishers are fined (up to £10,000 per day). This should generate £225,000 in 2021/22.
- The council is carrying out a review of its winter service. This would save £100,000. This would not change the current network of roads treated and there would be no change for the winter of 2020/21.
- For adults with care support needs, the council intends to focus on maximising the use of existing contracted capacity and looking at creative ways to meet needs at a lower cost. This would be done while also helping residents to live as independently as possible. It is anticipated that it will be possible to save £1m (around 1 per cent of the total budget) in each of the adults with care and support needs and Better Care Fund pooled budgets in 2021/22.
- A £430,000 increase was planned in the waste management budget in 2021/22 due to the forecast rise in the number of homes in the county. It was expected this would lead to more waste. However, new homes have not been built at the predicted pace and this investment can be deferred beyond 2021/22.
- A set of projects are underway to focus on outcomes for children the county council cares for to improve the ability to meet their needs through local placements, particularly children with complex needs. This includes two projects – one looking at providing the right type of foster placements for children and the other looking at the provision of small residential homes (two to three beds). The

aim is to be able to provide the placements within Oxfordshire wherever possible. This would save £1.02m.

- Funding was originally allocated for growth in demand for school transport, based on new build housing. However, housing hasn't been developed as quickly as anticipated. As such the council can save £700,000 in 2021/22.
- The county council will benefit from £1.66m of savings it has been able to make through the retendering of its insurance contract. This is based on an analysis of amounts that have been required in recent years.
- Based on activity in 2020/21 and looking forward to longer-lasting changed ways of working in 2021/22, the council estimates it will be able to save £750,000 on staff travel budgets and £100,000 on printing. This would be closely monitored throughout the year.
- The county council's property team will save £1.95m in 2021/22 rising to £3.3m in 2022/23. The focus in 2021/22 will be on joint working with Cherwell District Council to blend the two property teams and jointly find more efficient ways of working.

The council's annual net budget in 2021/22 is currently forecast to be £485m.

SPECIFIC REPORT FOR BINFIELD HEATH

ANSWERS TO ENQUIRIES ABOUT CABLE ERECTION/LAYING

I can advise: 1) Openreach is laying/erecting a one-mile fibre cable from Mill Road/Mill Lane, Shiplake to Shiplake Primary School as part of a BDUK/DfE initiative; 2) Airband is working in the area to provide fibre connections for rural businesses as part of a Defra contract.

NOTICE OF LANDOWNER DEPOSIT: LAND OWNED BY PHILLIMORE SUCCESSORS

I have received complaints that the accompanying maps are poorly annotated, lack place names and are of such low quality that printing-off for parish noticeboards is pointless. I have asked officers to request that the originator supply maps of higher quality and revise publication deadlines accordingly. I have also asked for clarification about the purpose of the notice.

STREETLIGHTS ON A4155 AT THAMES FARM

I am investigating whether these can be temporarily turned off pending site occupation.

SPECIFIC SODC REPORT FOR BINFIELD HEATH

THAMES FARM: P20/S2808/DIS (DRAINAGE)

A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) is awaited from Taylor Wimpey. The moth-balled site has been shielded with close-clad fencing. This is temporary and not a replacement for tree replanting.

SODC ward councillor's report – Binfield Heath – 22nd Feb 2021

Covid-19 Happily, there is now clear evidence that the lockdown is working and that new cases are diminishing. However, pressure on hospitals remains high; although starting to ease. In this context government have indicated that the 3rd national lockdown can begin to gradually relax - as follows:-

- 8th March All schools return, 2 people can meet outdoors.
- 29th March Up to 6 people from up to two households can meet outdoors.

- 12th April Shops, gyms and hairdressers and outdoor hospitality re-open.
- 17th May Up to 6 people from up to two households can meet indoors,
- and Cinemas re-open – as do larger venues to half capacity (10k max)
- 21st June Legally enforced restrictions may end

• The above provisionally, subject to no new surprises from variants or hospitalisations and vaccine roll-out Locally, at 17/2 Oxford City was at a weekly rate of 100 per 100k population. By comparison Cherwell DC was 86, West Oxon DC at 41, SODC at 58 and Vale of WH DC at 60. Reading BC (to 17th Feb) was at 93. (By comparison see per my January report when I noted:- At 19/1 Oxford City was at a weekly rate of 472 per 100k population (12/1 was 548 and 5/1 was 571). By comparison Cherwell DC was 477 (12/1 was 548 and 5/1 was 997), West Oxon DC at 193 (12/1 was 314 and 5/1 was 428), SODC at 247 (12/1 was 320 and 5/1 was 520) and Vale of WH DC at 284 (12/1 was 299 and 5/1 was 442). Reading BC to 19/1 was at 616 (12/1 was 735). These numbers had been surging, but have now edged back following the impact of the 3rd lockdown. (By comparison in December I noted: At 16/12, Oxford City was at a weekly rate of 256 per 100k population. By comparison Cherwell DC was 256, West Oxon DC at 157, SODC at 158 and Vale of WH DC at 161. Reading BC (to 8th Dec) was at 373 – rather higher. These numbers have been rising rapidly after the end of the national lockdown.) There is however some concern that more variants have emerged and that the “South African” and “Brazilian” mutations seem rather less impacted by the current vaccines. Happily the Kent “B117” variant is well addressed by the current vaccines; it having now become the dominant strain in the UK. Because of the way that the vaccines have been designed there is high confidence that adaptations to deal with the variants that seemed to first emerge in the southern hemisphere can be fast-tracked - within a matter of 2-3 months. However this may imply a need for extra “booster” vaccine shots in the autumn. We know that the southern hemisphere variants are already present in the UK to some degree, the concern being to contain their spread. Overall, the advice must still to proceed with caution. The vaccine programme is in full swing and mass vaccination centres are opening in Oxfordshire – supported, in part, by local council staff. The first was at the Kassam stadium in Oxford – focussing first on frontline health workers; all appointments being by invitation only. The national intent is to get all of the first 4 priority groups’ first dose done by mid-February (over 70s, clinically highly vulnerable people and healthcare plus social care staff - around 15m people) and the first dose for the next 5 groups (down to age 50 - around 17m people) by early May. The programme will continue with 2nd doses with the aim of reaching all (adults) by end of September. As noted above there may need then to be booster vaccinations for new strains and to maintain antibody levels. As yet it is believed that having had a vaccination is not a guarantee against being infected by the virus or indeed against passing the virus to others – though it is expected to improve matters. Testing centres are being opened with a view to improve tracking of the virus and with support from local councils. One of these is to be at the Beacon centre in Wantage.

Covid Support The Council support lines remain OPEN: The Community Hub at the District Council remains a valuable point of contact for residents who need support - and so if you’re contacted by any members of the public who are worried or need help, please point them towards the hub on 01235 422600 or email communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk. The Community Hub team is currently available from: 8.30am-5pm Monday to Thursday; 8.30am-4.30pm Friday. The message to anybody who is unsure if they need help, or if they’re unsure if the council can help, is - if in doubt – please get in touch! The dedicated Business Support Team is on hand with advice and guidance for businesses in our communities to help understand what the lockdown might mean to them, and what support is available. There’s lots of information already at www.svbs.co.uk and this page will be updated all the time. If local Covid community groups find they have significant pressures, they can contact the Hub to get advice and support. The government’s “Test and Trace Support Payment” scheme is being extended to 31 March 2021. It had been due to end on the 31 January. This is the scheme that provides a £500 grant to eligible recipients if they lose out financially from having to self-isolate through the

national Test and Trace system. The cut-off time for applications has been increased to 28 days after the first day of self-isolation. This makes it easier for the council to administer and verify and it also provides a bit more time for people to submit their application.

Additional Restrictions Grants for businesses The latest Additional Restrictions Grant scheme for businesses is now open for applications. This is the discretionary scheme to provide financial support to businesses who have been excluded or unsuccessful from other government grant schemes. SODC are processing applications on a first come, first served basis, so please encourage businesses to apply immediately. To find out if they're eligible and to apply for the grant, local business owners should visit the Additional Restrictions Grant page of the business support website. Businesses can register an e-mail address and get updates to advise of any updates or new grants in regard to current or future restrictions at our business support website: www.svbs.co.uk

Garden Waste Collections Happily the Brown bin service is set to resume from 22nd February. (It had had to be suspended as the number of Biffa staff off sick or self-isolating was too high.) Although this is a paid-for service, the contract with residents is that they will receive 20 collections per year and in some years without heavy snow etc they actually get 26 with extra collections made during the busier times of the year. SODC will be ensuring that all 20 contractual collections are made - and hopefully more when they're most needed in the growing season. Christmas trees will be collected eventually, but in the meantime they can also be taken to the County Council's waste disposal sites.

Councillor Community Grants – deadline extended The deadline was extended to 19th February applications for community funding under the district councillor scheme. As last year, each councillor has £5k to allocate within our ward to community projects which need a bit of seed funding or complete financing and which can be completed within a year. David and I will work together on this area and between us can offer up to £1,100 to Binfield Heath. Just to re-emphasize, happily the complications over grant-awarding parishes have now been set aside this year. (I believe that Mandy has submitted a bid as clerk.) This year the grants have a linkage to the SODC Corporate Plan, so any applications should align with the priority objectives described here:

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/uncategorised/counciloutlines-priorities-in-new-plan/>
Application forms and guidelines can be found here: <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/communitysupport/grants/councillor-community-grants/>

Judicial Review on the Local Plan You may have seen in the media that a local Community Interest Company (CIC) called Bioabundance has launched a Judicial Review of the decision to adopt the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035. The grounds for challenge are that: • the worsening effect on climate change of excessive housing numbers is not given adequate attention • the calculation of housing numbers is not coherent • at the adoption vote, councillors unlawfully took account of threatened consequences of government intervention, and the vote was dictated by MHCLG The Council will respond to the claim, and of course due process requires the right of any member of the public or organisation to launch a legal process of this kind. However many such bids do not pass the screening stage – so developments are awaited. (I understand that a separate challenge has been made directly onto the Secretary of State, but that is not a matter for MHCLG to respond to.)

2021/2022 Budget At its meeting on 11th February, SODC's Council agreed its budget for 2021/22 - in line with statutory duties to set the Council Tax and to determine the level of deficit that will need to be covered by reserve funds. Covid has had a big impact on both 2020-21 and the budget for 2021-22. Despite being a low-cost council and significant efforts to improve the district's financial position, deficits continue. This is because income levels are not high enough – largely due to past failures to set a proper level of council tax. SODC's council tax level (20-21 was £126.24 for a Band D property) is some £68 less than the average for shire districts in England. That difference causes a difference in excess of £4m per annum. The average cost per property unit (Band D) in SODC based on 2020-21 is about £328. That is £200 more than the level of council tax noted above! This therefore indicates the extent to which SODC is subject to needs for funding from business rates,

investment and property income, and other government funding such as the New Homes Bonus – which ends in 21-22. Government have announced that it will be replaced with something else, but with both the amount and basis of what follows being unknown. SODC face the problem of being forced into excessive growth and yet not enabled to finance services to support such growth as higher numbers fuel the deficit! Despite past promises to provide a sound and secure financial framework to allow proper planning of Local Government finance in fact there has only been a 1-year settlement this year with future key funding regarding Business Rates, New Homes Bonus, Council Tax-setting rules and government grants all being profoundly unclear. To be fair Covid has of course complicated the situation for government! Many local councils are under financial pressure and a number are having to request special assistance from government. This particular budget in 2021-22 is overshadowed by major potential impacts from Covid, both in terms of extra costs and losses of income. Moreover, because of the extent that officers across the council are stretched by the complications and extraordinary support required for Covid there is currently limited resources to staff more than a basic budget process. The impact of Covid and a provision for a potential Judicial Review on the Local Plan are together £2.2m – pushing the budgeted deficit in 2021-22 to £(4.3)m. The Covid cost is estimated net of some recovery from central government, but as yet there is limited information on further compensation from government. Underlying improvements in the SODC finances – including adjustments to fees and charges help improve the overall forecast use of reserves to 2025-26 – despite the Covid impact in the short term However, this depends in part of future decisions by government on local authority funding. The budget has been put in place with what we know now. Everything will then be kept under review and, probably, be subject to a budget revision during the year. Many of the projects identified in the new Corporate Plan for the district are underway. Others will be scoped and developed during the year as Covid pressures permit. Contingent funding has been budgeted to support these with the intent to invest for future benefits. SODC has set a rate of £131.24 for a Band D property in 21-22. This represents an increase of £5. The overall charge for a Band D property – including all local councils and authorities – will on average be £2,034.99; an increase of £69.54 being 3.54%. Of the increase £45.67 relates to OCC (County), £15.00 relates to TVP (Police) and £3.87. Of course the Band D charge will vary from parish to parish and according to the valuation band of a particular property. The average parish charge will be £99.36(an increase of 4.1%). However, clearly in Eye and Dunsden it is £17 lower at £82.36. 2021 Elections At the time of writing, the government have confirmed that local elections will take place in early May – despite the challenges of Covid. Officers are working on the logistics planning needed to accommodate both voting and vote-counting. Counting would be more risky if done under current arrangements where all votes are counted overnight in a single centre and session with an army of specially recruited tellers. It may be that counting will not be done centrally for these elections. Social distancing is much easier for small scale events. It is also quicker to count smaller numbers of votes! But our polling stations could have different numbers of elections. Both the Police & Crime Commissioner and County Council elections are due. But some areas could also have byelections or a Neighbourhood Plan referendum. As with a lot of things at the moment there is much uncertainty around the detail – assuming that government’s decision holds! I would strongly encourage people to consider applying for a postal vote if they are concerned about voting in person – see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-a-postal-vote>

Keep safe!

Leigh Rawlins
District Councillor