

## **BINFIELD HEATH PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the Binfield Heath Parish Council Meeting held on Monday June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020 at 6 pm by Zoom**

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Meeting of the Recreation Ground Charities & Allotment for the Labouring Poor Charity  
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**09/20 Recreation Ground** The ROSPA inspection will take place in July. A new playground litter list has been sent out.

**10/20 Allotments** The Clerk reported that one rent was still outstanding. A letter will be written. There is now a waiting list. **(Clerk to action)**

**11/20 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 K Maher, Cllr D Bartholomew (OCC) and Cllr L Rawlins (SODC). One member of the public.

**37/20 Apologies for absence** None

**38/20 Declarations of Interest** None

**39/20 Minutes of the Committee meeting held on Monday April 24<sup>th</sup> 2020** Cllr Summerland proposed the minutes were accepted as a true record. This was seconded by Cllr Ransom. All agreed.

**40/20 Matters Arising** All items on the agenda.

**41/20 County Councillor's report** Cllr Bartholomew's general report will be attached to the minutes. On local matters he reported that a) the consultation about the Reading Transport Strategy 2036 (including a North Reading Orbital route, a third Reading Bridge and North Reading Park & Rides) is available for responses until August and it is important that all parish councils in South Oxfordshire respond as the proposals have a major impact on the area. It was also suggested that the PC write to the leader of OCC, Ian Hudspeth to express great concern over the possibility of gross urbanisation. **(All Councillors to action)** If possible the PC should join with the other local PC's to make a joint response. Carole Lewis from Sonning Common PC is to lead this b) local work such as the next phase of surface dressing on the Sonning Common Rd and the further work at Coppid Crossroads is booked but no dates are arranged as yet. Cllr Bartholomew was thanked for his effort to pursue the work to avoid even more accidents at the Coppid Crossroads.

As a district councillor Cllr Bartholomew commented on planning: a) if the developer has approval for 20 properties adjacent to Thames Farm there will be 234 more houses along the A 4155 at Shiplake causing even more congestion in Henley b) the new emergency powers in place for any applications being referred to a Planning Committee cause concern as they curtail PC and Councillor powers to call-in applications.

**42/20 District Councillor's report** Cllr Rawlins discussed the planning issue. There is a huge backlog of applications to go to Committee and if applications are not processed by the deadline then the developer might have a better chance of a successful appeal against a refusal. Cllr Rawlins explained that the situation is untenable so emergency powers were set in place to avoid so many applications being referred to Committee. Cllr Rawlins' full report is attached to these minutes.

**43/20 Public Forum/Correspondence** The Chairman has responded to two e-mails recently. One related to excessive noise outside stipulated hours from a building site. The other one registered concern over a number of issues including the state of the village roads and the recent problems with Thames Water and road closure. These problems have been forwarded to OCC.

#### **44/20 Financial Situation**

44.01/20 The financial position was circulated.

44.02/20 The June accounts were presented. Invoices to the value of £806.35 were authorised for payment by BACS. These payments were proposed by Cllr Ransom and seconded by Cllr Fulton-Urry. **(Clerk to action)**

44.03/20 Councillor expenses: None this month

#### **45/20 Planning Matters**

##### ***New Applications***

P20/S1600/HH Two storey rear extension, porch extension and outbuilding Lavender Cottage

Heathfield Avenue Binfield Heath RG9 4EB. This application was discussed by a working party and was recommended for approval.

P20/S1704/HH New Extension & Alterations 10 Heathfield Avenue Binfield Heath RG9 4ED. This was discussed and the application will be recommended for approval.

### ***Applications Granted***

#### **46/20 Community Matters**

46.01/20 A significant amount of litter has been left in the Recreation Ground. Some of this was the responsibility of lads enjoying the freedom of playing football. The Chairman talked to the group and since then it has been better although placing litter in a bin is preferable to hanging it on a tree. Dealing and using drugs is an ongoing issue in the area. The police have been informed.

46.02/20 Denis Gilbert had forwarded his report on all the local footpaths. The PC have paid for the ground clearance of Footpath 10 at the top of Heathfield Avenue.

46.03/20 Cllr Lacey asked about the tree in the centre of the village. The Clerk responded that she will be informed when any remedial work is to take place.

#### **47/20 Highways/Transport and General Maintenance**

47.01/20 The third Reading Bridge meeting is discussed in Cllr Bartholomew's report. However, it was suggested that the Parish Council writes to Ian Hudspeth regarding the bridge, the Reading North Orbital and the three park and rides now mentioned by Reading. The Councillors will prepare a draft letter to be sent. Cllr Ransom will prepare a draft and pass to Councillors. **(All Councillors to action)** The PC also decided that it will join the group of PC's to be set up.

47.02/20 Coppid crossroads A further accident has occurred despite the improved signage. Highways have agreed further work to be undertaken in the near future. (See the OCC report)

47.03/20 Motorbike Racing on the A4155 This is an ongoing problem in the evenings and at weekends. The Police are aware. The Clerk was asked to add the item to the next EDPC agenda. **(Clerk to action)**

47.04/20 Plough Lane/Gravel Rd Sections of the road between the Polo Club towards Emmer Green are in very poor repair. Highways will be asked if it could be highlighted for repair. **(Chairman to action)**

**48/20 Risk Assessment** The Litter Pick section requires some amendment to note that the PC has a specific risk assessment for litter collection. **(Clerk to action)** Otherwise the risk assessment was accepted as reviewed. All agreed.

**49/20 Neighbourhood Plan** This cannot move forward until a public meeting of residents can be safely held.

**50/20 Neighbourhood Watch** The litter and drug problem had been discussed earlier. A meeting with the police is to be arranged re these problems. **(Clerk to action)**

**51/20 Covid 19** The local groups are now wound down although if anyone has a particular need the group can still be reached via Amanda Jennings. Thanks were given to all the volunteers who stepped up to help in the pandemic. **(Chairman to action)**

**52/20 Matters for future consideration** Local ditch clearance; Neighbourhood Plan; CIL money.

The meeting finished at 8.05pm

**Date of next meeting: Monday July 27<sup>th</sup> 2020**

## **REPORT TO BINFIELD HEATH PARISH COUNCIL JUNE 2020 FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW GENERAL OCC REPORT**

### **SCHOOLS PRIORITISE SAFETY, HYGIENE AND SOCIAL DISTANCING ‘**

Children will be taught in classrooms where safety, hygiene and social distancing are ‘absolute priorities.’ This is the message from OCC as schools carry out risk assessments in preparation for welcoming back more pupils in June. The council has delivered hundreds of thousands of personal protective equipment (PPE) items to Oxfordshire schools:

- IIR Masks: 151,000 (these are surgical, close contact, water resistant masks),

- Aprons: 181,000,
- Gloves: 121,000,
- Visors: 900,
- Sanitiser: 7,500 litres.

This PPE equipment will help schools manage an immediate response in the unlikely event of a pupil becoming unwell. In addition, support is being provided to over 900 early years providers regarding supplies of PPE. Since the lockdown began in March, 94% of Oxfordshire schools have remained open for children of key workers. In preparation for receiving more pupils back to the classroom, schools are now being asked to complete a risk assessment in conjunction with staff and union representatives. The risks and challenges will vary, so what works in one school may not work in another. This means that some schools will be able to welcome more children, or more year groups than others. Each school will act in the best interests of each child and family. Local testing arrangements are in place; and everyone over the age of five can access them if they have COVID-19 symptoms. The council is committed to supporting disadvantaged pupils; existing free school meals arrangements will continue.

### **CYCLEWAYS AND FOOTPATHS TO BE CLEARED AND REPAIRED**

Cyclists and walkers are set to benefit from a concerted plan of action to clear and prepare Oxfordshire's network of cycleways and footpaths ready for the expected rises in demand as lockdown is very gradually relaxed. As the people of Oxfordshire look to return to work and school during the Summer, cycling and walking will become more important than ever – both offer zero emission ways to travel which will improve health and wellbeing as well as helping to address the need to keep socially distant. A recent survey of all 63 OCC Councillors found that the need to improve cycling infrastructure was a standout priority in terms of how Oxfordshire's share of the government's £250m Emergency Active Travel grant fund should be spent. Amongst other practical and quick to implement measures, such as improving signage and sweeping the busiest paths and cycle lanes, keeping vegetation under control and fixing surfaces feature in our immediate plans of work. This is all part of keeping the network safe to use for cyclists and pedestrians as lockdown restrictions ease but will also hopefully encourage more people to walk and cycle in the long term. OCC is developing a programme of work for the county's city, urban, suburban and rural areas. In each case, the work will pay particular attention to narrower areas that might be widened for greater access. Paths where any surface improvement work will also be identified so repairs can be made. If people encounter any issues whilst out walking, cycling or riding on the path network then these can be reported or checked on OCC's website. People can report a roadside vegetation problem, as well as other street problems, through our online reporting tool [Fixmystreet](#).

### **OCC TO EXTEND OPENING HOURS AT HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES**

OCC is to increase the opening hours at all HWRCs from Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May. The centres will now open at 8am and close at the later time of 5pm. This applies seven days a week. Please note that that late-night opening on Thursdays and the acceptance of trailers and hire vans remains suspended for the time being. The following are important points:

- Residents must self-police and abide by social distancing of two metres from site teams and other residents **at all times**.
- Residents must follow any instructions given by site teams to ensure queues and sites are managed safely
- Vehicle numbers and parking bays are reduced on site, and once the maximum is reached the site will operate on a one-out one-in basis. PLEASE NOTE the potential for delays and queues.
- OCC will continue to charge for non-household waste brought to sites and this will be **by contactless card payment only**.

- Site teams will be there for guidance only and will **not** be able to assist residents in unloading their waste.
- Only one resident is permitted out of the vehicle, unless to remove a heavy load which would otherwise be unsafe to remove. Visits are best made by one person per vehicle.
- In line with Public Health England guidance, residents who are vulnerable, or who are showing symptoms which may indicate coronavirus, should not visit household recycling centres.
- Residents can check if a HWRC can deal with their material by using the online tool Waste Wizard: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/waste-and-recycling/household-waste/repair-reuse-or-recycle>

## **BOLD PLANS FOR TRANSPORT AS OCC PREPARES FOR THE “NEW NORMAL”**

Bold transport proposals are in the pipeline for Oxfordshire as the county joins the nation in gradually emerging from lockdown and preparing for the “new normal.” Innovative ideas have been identified by county councillors all over Oxfordshire in response to the Government’s national £250 million cash fund to implement changes to roads and transport networks. There’s set to be a focus on encouraging residents to walk and cycle, with the county council linking up with district councils, Oxford City Council and other partners on the work. In terms of longer-term recovery, the use of public transport will be encouraged as part of the county-wide strategy. Oxfordshire County Council’s Cabinet Member for Environment Cllr Yvonne Constance and Cycling Champion Cllr Suzanne Bartington recently asked all 63 county councillors covering every part of the county for their ideas on what should be done.

Enthusiastic responses were received as the council seeks to make sure that every town and village will benefit from how the funds are invested.

## **SPECIFIC REPORT FOR BINFIELD HEATH**

### **READING TRANSPORT STRATEGY 2036 (INCLUDING THIRD READING BRIDGE)**

I emailed all clerks in my Division on 17<sup>th</sup> May to let you know that Reading is now consulting on its Transport Strategy 2036. Several proposals would have major impacts on South Oxfordshire:

- North Reading Orbital Route (p97)
- A Third Thames crossing (see p98)
- North Reading Park and Rides (p111)

The consultation closes on 30 August and I urge you to respond

here:<https://consult.reading.gov.uk/dens/reading-transport-strategy-2036/> In addition, you may also wish to email the Leader of OCC [ian.hudspeth@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ian.hudspeth@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

### **ACCIDENTS AT EMMER GREEN ROAD/SONNING COMMON ROAD CROSSROADS**

Subsequent to the recent accidents, I have agreed with officers that the improvements detailed below will be introduced in order to improve safety at the spot.

- A new entrance Gateway feature – ‘Coppid crossroads’
- A new advanced crossroads map sign
- Enhanced Stop signs
- Enhanced advanced stop signs
- New dragons teeth roadmarkings
- An additional length of centreline
- Additional slow markings
- Refurbishment of slightly worn roadmarkings

### **SONNING COMMON ROAD/BLOUNTS COURT ROAD SURFACE DRESSING**

As the PC is aware, I have been pressing for improvements to the road connecting Binfield Heath to Sonning Common (Sonning Common Road becoming Blounts Court Road) for many years. The first phase between Devils Hill and Binfield Heath was completed last year and the second phase between Sonning Common and Devils Hill was completed during April.

## **SPECIFIC SODC REPORT FOR BINFIELD HEATH**

### **PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT BEHIND CROSSWAYS NEXT TO THAMES FARM**

A developer is proposing a new housing estate of 20 properties adjacent to Thames Farm. If this is approved, the total number of additional new homes on the A4155 would be 234, made up as follows:

Crossways (Westbourne) 20  
Mount Ida 8  
Retirement Village 65  
Thames Farm 95  
Thames Farm Barns 4  
Tower House 2  
Wyevale 40

Aside from the staggering 35% increase in the size of Shiplake, there are questions about the impact of all this extra traffic on Reading Road/Duke Street, which is desperately congested in normal times when it often takes half an hour just to drive through Henley in rush hour.

### **CURTAILING OF PC & COUNCILLOR POWERS TO CALL-IN PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

Under Emergency Powers, the following changes to planning call-ins have been agreed between the ruling LibDem/Green coalition and the Chief Executive:

- The right of parish councils to address the Planning Committee has been withdrawn.
- Applications objected to by parish councils will no longer be automatically referred to the Planning Committee.
- Call-ins to the Planning Committee by Ward Councillors must be approved by the Head of Planning, the Chair of the Planning Committee and the Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee.

The Conservative Opposition is deeply concerned by these changes.

### **SODC ward councillor's report – Binfield Heath – 22nd June 2020**

**Covid-19** The Emergency powers "LRF" (or Local Resilience Forum) orders under which officers take all necessary decisions continue. Scope now exists for remote meetings. The government have as yet failed to make any changes to the planning system - other than enabling virtual processes with videoconferencing. Thus applications still have to be accepted and the same "determination" or decision date deadlines still apply. As yet site visits are not possible – either for officers, consultants providing evidence or indeed inspectors. Public appeal hearings have been in suspension, but there is active consideration of how much can be restarted and done remotely. All across local government there is concern that that large and contentious applications cannot be resolved at this time - if proper democratic processes are to be respected. The failure of central government to make any adaptations – other than enabling remote meetings is putting pressure on SODC and other LPAs to work through remote planning committee meetings and to deal with the large backlog. Developers could seek to benefit from non-

determination by the deadlines by triggering appeals. In order to deal with this backlog it is likely that there is going to have to be a triage system whereby not all the cases that would normally go to committee will be able to do so. As advised to clerks on 19th May officers have had to put in place temporary emergency measures with virtual Planning Committees and less cases going to full committee. The newly established Community Hub at SODC has been extremely active in supporting vulnerable residents over the past couple of months. Activity levels have now started to reduce, and were much lower over the past couple of weeks; there were only 46 calls over the recent Bank Holiday weekend, which very much reflects the way that local groups have established strong support networks for their own communities. The Hub's new opening hours will be 9am to 6pm, Monday to Saturday and closed on Sundays. As you can appreciate, these tasks are new to many of the staff at SODC, and some of the technical systems have had to be redeveloped to cope (e.g. the business rates system is set up to take money in from local businesses, not to send funds the other way!). All of these new tasks also had to be absorbed at the same time as Council staff were being moved to home-working, having to deal with their own personal situations (home-schooling, self-isolating etc.) and maintaining existing services such as waste collection. We can be very proud of the way SODC staff have stepped up to the challenge and have responded to the new demands being placed on them.

**Council Finances** The impact of Covid-19 is having a very serious impact on local government with finances already weak. For SODC there are estimates of an overall net extra cost of £1 million per month of lockdown (including losses of income) – there may also be ongoing costs after strict lockdown - as lockdown is gradually eased. In principle central government originally suggested that they will meet the necessary financial impacts. However, more recently there have been suggestions that loss of income – much the largest impact – may not now be fully covered; (even though they arise from UK Gov decisions).

Nationally Government have provided some £3.2 bn to local councils (County and District levels) although the overall impact is estimated at more like £10 bn. Government have indicated that a full review towards further steps are under review. SODC has a significant annual deficit (largely from past failure to increase council tax appropriately) and already has very low costs by comparison with other districts. Fortunately it does have a bit more by way of reserves than many others. Thus overall there is great uncertainty and there are very many unknowns. Not only are there direct losses of income and extra costs, but also the value of investments and assets is also reduced. Clearly the latter might in due course enjoy some recovery in value.

**Planning Committees** SODC's first virtual planning meeting took place successfully on 28 May. Members of the public were able to watch online via a link on the SODC website, and a recording is available at <https://youtu.be/LMa7H8Lyr7c> if you are curious to see how it went! For future meetings, anyone wishing to take part will need to submit a written statement by email in advance, which will be shared with all the planning committee members. The aim is to introduce full online public participation soon, as soon as the IT security issues around public speaking are resolved. Under the temporary arrangements, less cases will go to committee and now councillor call-ins have a vital function. Call-ins must be done within 28 days of an application or a major revision to an application. So, it is important to flag cases to David and I if they are strongly opposed by the parish and there are sound planning reasons for rejection.

**Local Plan** The Examination process is set to proceed via video-conferencing. Proposed modifications to the emerging Local Plan 2034 are being drafted for submission to the Inspector but it will be up to the Inspector to accept or reject these. It has now been confirmed that the Examination in Public (EIP) will be held virtually during July and August. Some local groups have written to express concerns that this will restrict public participation. Those who made representations on the plan when it was being submitted in early 2019 are eligible to actually participate but other members of the public will be able to watch proceedings online. The organisation of the EIP is not within the control of SODC and

is organised by the Planning Inspectorate.

**Waste collection** As you will know the OCC recycling waste centres were closed to the public during the Covid-19 lockdown, but are now open again – with changed hours and some operational restrictions. The hours are gradually being extended. SODC has managed to keep its full bins service going throughout – including the brown bins service.

**Adapting our roads to accommodate safe cycling and walking** Across the nation authorities are preparing for the easing of the lockdown restrictions and it has become patently clear that our narrow pavements and car-oriented roads are simply unsafe for an increase in bicycle traffic and social distancing. County Councillors have been collating proposals from across their wards to submit for consideration, since OCC is the Highways Authority. Much of the focus so far has been on the more urban areas, including Oxford City, but there is a good case to see this vision extended more widely to between our villages and towns and between villages. Once public transport is being used again, there is a key opportunity to integrate it with cycling with plenty of safe cycle storage and buses which can carry bikes for onward use. The Statutory guidance, 'Traffic Management Act 2004: network management in response to COVID-19' can be read here :-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reallocating-road-space-in-response-to-covid-19statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities/traffic-management-act-2004-network-management-inresponse-to-covid-19> OCC are also exploring scope to improve bus services, but, as yet, this is focussed around the Oxford Bus Company and operators that seem to exclude Reading Buses and Whites.

**Support for Local Businesses** The South and Vale Business Support Service has received a huge increase in visits to its website, particularly since it is responsible for administering the business support schemes announced by the Government. From 3rd June they have been processing applications for the new Discretionary grants fund, aiming to support small businesses which were not eligible for the earlier rounds of funding. However, they have warned that the funds available total only 5% of the amount available under previous programmes, so they will not be able to respond positively to all applications. Further information is available at <https://www.svbs.co.uk> It is also worth noting that the SVBS website has an online database listing all businesses which are open and trading in the area, so it is worth checking this to add your own business or to check who is currently open for business locally.

**Car Parking Charges** to be re-introduced With the gradual re-opening of shops and other facilities, car-parking charges have been reintroduced from 8th June in SODC-owned car parks. This will go some way to restore some of the Council's lost income, and will also free up spaces for shoppers, who are still discouraged from using public transport. (If free spaces are taken by people all-day parking – diverted from other charging sites!) NHS staff and care workers who display a national COVID-19 pass can continue to park for free. To claim a pass, staff should e-mail :- [carparks.southandvale.uk@sabagroup.com](mailto:carparks.southandvale.uk@sabagroup.com) , including proof of their employment.

**Celebrating our local Volunteers** Finally, in National Volunteers' Week, thanks are due to the many individuals who have stepped up over the past few months to support their fellow residents and vulnerable people in the community. The community spirit on show has been remarkable and it is to be hoped that the sense of community cohesion will continue long after this current pandemic is over.

**Oxfordshire 2050** There is a new consultation for Oxfordshire 2050; how do you see Oxfordshire's future for living and working, connectivity and Climate Change? How keen are you on Oxfordshire taking a share of a possible 1 million homes in the Ox-Cam Arc (2011-2050)? The Oxfordshire Growth Deal (with links to SODC's LP2034) provided for a supply of 100,000 homes in Oxfordshire. If for the sake of argument Oxfordshire were awarded 220,000 from the Arc that would leave a further 120,000 homes to deliver by 2050. Contribute your ideas for the high-level 2050 Plan across a wide span here :- <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordshire-2050>

Leigh Rawlins  
District Councillor

