

BINFIELD HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Binfield Heath Parish Council Meeting held on Monday October 24th at 7.00pm in the Scout Hut

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

022/22 Allotments. Rent renewals went out and rents are coming in.

023/22 Recreation Ground

023.01/22 Regular inspections have taken place and repairs have been carried out.

023.02/22 There is a query over one set of swings. The ROSPA inspection has recommended one set of swings has been removed as it was unsafe.

023.03/22 The Clerk was asked to order another baby swing to replace those lost. A replacement spring for the gate to the sandpit is also required. **(Clerk to action)**

023.04/22 The small bridge on the entrance to the recreation ground is damaged and is a safety issue. Quotations were sought and the cheapest of these was accepted.

024/22 Public Forum An e-mail has been received from an allotment holder reporting the failure of a post on the pedestrian gate to the allotments. **(Clerk to action)**

The meeting of the Parish Council

Present Cllr P Rollason, Cllr L Ransom, Cllr H Lacey, Cllr S Summerland, Cllr Sarah Fulton-Urry, Cllr Robert Davis, Cllr D Bartholomew (OCC, SODC), Cllr L Rawlins (SODC). 4 members of the public.

121/22 Apologies. None

122/22 Declarations of Interest None

123/22 Minutes of the meetings held on Monday 26th September 2022. Cllr Summerland proposed the minutes were accepted as a true record. This was seconded by Cllr Lacey. All agreed.

124/22 Matters Arising All items on the agenda.

125/22 County Councillor's report Cllr Bartholomew's full report is attached to the minutes.

126/22 District Councillor's report Cllr Rawlins presented his report that is attached to these minutes. Cllr Lacey asked about the new Code of Conduct. It has more detail re Conflicts of Interest.

127/22 Public Forum

127.1/22 A resident asked if the PC could ask when the signs, cement silo, search light will be removed from Walled Garden House and perhaps a date when the rebuilding of the wall. The Clerk was asked to write to Shiplake Homes. **(Clerk to action)**

127.2/22 The Clerk had been informed that the Remembrance wreaths were ready for collection. The Chairman will lay the wreath this year. **(Clerk to action)**

128/22 Financial Situation

128.01/22 The financial position had been circulated.

128.02/22 The October accounts were presented. Invoices to the value of £2,032.97 were authorised for payment. These payments were proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Cllr Summerland. All agreed. **(Clerk to action)**

129/22 Planning Matters None

130/22 Neighbourhood Plan Councillor Davis had sent an update to the NP. The next step for the steering group is reviewing the changes to the draft plan from SODC. The list of Green Spaces will also be appropriately allocated. An application for a small Councillor Community Grant to cover part of the remaining costs will be made. A further grant may be possible via SODC **(Cllr Davis & Clerk to action)**

The Local Parish Councils are uniting in their application to an extension to the AONB. A Landscape Value Assessment is to be drawn up for the land belonging to all the parishes. It was agreed that BHPC will continue to support the idea and contribute to the cost.

131/22 Community Matters The installation of the defibrillator will be erected on the face of the Forge as soon as possible after the walls of the building have been surveyed. The Charity Trustees will be arranging this as soon as possible.

132/22 Highways/Transport and General Maintenance The new bus shelter should be erected soon. The insurance company has refunded the PC for the costs involved.

133/22 Green & Open Spaces Airband Poles. A meeting had been arranged for the PC to meet

Airband to discuss the necessity for 17 poles to be erected. At the last minute the meeting was cancelled and the Clerk was informed that the work was not going to take place. The Clerk was asked to contact Airband to ask whether the application is to be withdrawn. **(Clerk to action)**

134/22 Website Compliance The website compliance is still being addressed.

135/22 The Forge The Chairman suggested that a noticeboard was placed on the wall of the Forge

136/22 Matters for future consideration Budget 2023; Neighbourhood Watch; safer parking in the Parish.

The meeting finished at 8.40pm.

Date of next meeting: Monday November 28th 2022

REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS OCTOBER 2022 FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW 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.”

SODC ward councillor’s report Eye & Dunsden – 25th October 2022

Covid-19

The reliability of data on Covid cases is now much reduced following the end of test and trace. However national figures suggest sharp falls in cases and this appears to be supported by hospital data and makes sense for this time of year. At 15th October, reported cases in SODC were at a weekly rate per 100k of population of 125 (it peaked at 1,504 on 6th Jan) – a low level – but now rising – albeit that reporting may be incomplete. Indeed Reading BC have ceased reporting their figures because of fears about accuracy. Oddly, excess deaths nationally through the summer have been higher than would be expected without any simple cause being identified. It would appear that the aftermath of Covid on our NHS health system and individuals is taking a toll. In Australia and New Zealand winter flu was more impactful and more virulent than normal and this may well transmit into the UK’s winter season. Booster jabs for both Flu and Covid for over 50s and the vulnerable are being rolled out through autumn, before any winter peak.

Hackney Carriage tariffs SODC are implementing set hackney carriage tariffs for the first time. The vast majority of other councils do set tariffs. The rates in South Oxfordshire are being set at the 16th highest at a level compatible with Oxford, Wokingham and Reading. These tariffs offer cabbies a fair reward and give passengers a reliable and consistent approach to charging.

Henley Conservation Area A new conservation area for Henley is being progressed through due process and will in due course influence planning decisions within the designated area.

Investment Zones Hoping to achieve a dash for economic growth, the Government are considering designating some investment zones wherein there would be deregulation and low/no tax incentives. Within these planning controls would be minimised and planning designations such as Green Belt, AONB, SSSIs and habitats etc protections dispensed with. The suggestion is that these might incentivise companies to invest and grow – without Government investment – although there is past evidence that in significant measure they simply cause hopping from outside the zone to within it and without great growth in new jobs. To the extent that planning is abandoned in these zones there would be little local control nor application of commonly expected standards. Personally I would see risks that rather echo the slackening of building control before Grenfell. South Oxfordshire already has very high growth in our Local Plan to 2035; we do not need extra! At its council on 13th October SODC agreed a motion noting concerns with these zones, loss of environmental standards – particularly on Greenfield areas and clearly stating that SODC already has a very high level of growth in its Local Plan 2035, needs no extra and would not want one. OCC has written in similar terms to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities explaining why no expression of interest is being made for Oxfordshire and noting that it would conflict with the agreed Vision and principles of development in the county.

Crossways (Harpsden on Shiplake border) appeal

Annoyingly the appeal Inspector for the Crossways site refused to apply the widely understood logic of settlement limits and also refused to accept SODC’s annual statement of Housing Land Supply – simply because, requiring responses from sites developers across the district, it had not been available at the hearing – even though it was provided in good time for his determination of the case. Instead he asked the applicants if they would be content for him to accept this evidence. For their part they argued to exclude such evidence;

surprise! SODC had applied a detailed methodology to the HLS statement – following “best practice” as counselled by the LGAs Planning Advisory Service that works closely with central government to help councils comply. Under the government’s HLS rules Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have to prove their supply – by reference to support evidence from.... Developers. (Particularly trying to deal with the bizarre findings of the appeal inspector for Inspired Villages.) Yet here, when that process is followed as swiftly as responses could be obtained from developers, the appeal inspector decides ad hoc to ignore it. The current set of ministers are said to be considering the future of the HLS rules and targets. Moreover the new PM denounced the Planning inspectorate for too frequently not upholding the decisions of LPAs! It is certainly evident that the current system is chaotic and not fit for purpose.

Woodcote – NP renewal The Woodcote NP went to referendum on 29th Sept and gained a 92.4% Yes vote on a 34.5% turnout. It took them 6 years of hard work for that revision. The NP was made by SODC at its council meeting on 13th October. Woodcote was the “trailblazer” larger village – along with Thame town at the start of NPs in South Oxfordshire. They provided a lot of help to Sonning Common during our first NP. Congratulation to Dr Geoff Botting and the team there. SODC IT and processes “transformation” One of the baleful fruits of past decision to outsource SODC services in an ineffectual way has been a lack of IT development and progression to more up-to-date and efficient systems. A major programme of analysis and migration is now being planned. Analysis has taken place of all activities and processes in the council with a view to providing a better and more efficient service. This analysis has identified many opportunities for improvements and scope to migrate to better software and hardware-provision solutions that will be better and also offer flexibility and resilience.

Performance reporting – Corporate Plan and Climate action Plan Quarter One reports are being published against the criteria for SODC’s action plans. Generally progress is good.

SODC Constitution SODC adopted a new constitution at its council on 13th October. The new constitution was broadly updated by Patrick Arran the officer who is the new head of Legal & Democratic, in conjunction with a working committee of councillors.

Community Governance SODC’s Community Governance committee met on 10th September. It confirmed some boundary changes arising from housing development; but nothing locally in this ward.

Motion re Didcot boundary and Great Western Park Most of Didcot sits within South Oxfordshire, however a significant part of Great Western Park sits in Harwell parish in the Vale of White Horse District Council. At its council on 13th October SODC agreed a motion that officers should write a report on the options to address matters and potentially to ask the Boundary Commission to consider a change to the border between SODC and VoWHDC. Where a settlement expands it is normal to consider arrangements where it all sits within one set of councils.

AONB extension The next formal meeting is scheduled for 25th October.

Councillor Grants Please start thinking ahead for councillor grants. They will close around the end of January 2023, but ideally you should be ready before.

Old Forge Congratulations to all concerned on the acquisition and scope to develop the Old Forge as a village hub. However, some concerns have been raised with me concerning the future of another site – for discussion.

Leigh Rawlins
District Councillor