

BINFIELD HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Binfield Heath Parish Council Meeting held on Monday September 25th at 7.00pm in the Scout hut

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

18/23 Allotments. There is one person on the allotment waiting list and one plot available. Rent renewals have been sent out.

19/23 Recreation Ground

19.01/23 The Chairman accompanied the inspector and ROSPA have sent the report. A number of repairs to the equipment is necessary including the replacement of two top rails. The Clerk was asked to obtain quotations for all repairs. **(Clerk to action)**

19.02/23 A tree survey was undertaken in the recreation ground. One tree has been pollarded immediately. Advice is being taken on other trees. The idea of putting Tree Preservation Orders on the trees was discussed. The Clerk was asked to contact the tree officer at SODC to request that the trees in the recreation ground and four in the shop garden are surveyed with regard to this. **(Clerk to action)**

The meeting of the Parish Council

Present Cllr L Ransom, Cllr H Lacey, Cllr Robert Davis, Cllr Summerland, Cllr Fulton-Urry Cllr L Rawlins (SODC) and Mr Robert Sherwood, the Chiltern Society representative for the Binfield Heath footpaths.

097/23 Apologies Cllr P Rollason, Cllr D Bartholomew (OCC)

098/23 Declarations of Interest Cllrs Lis Ransom and Hugh Lacey declared a personal interest in the planning application P23/S2880/FUL.

099/23 Minutes of the meetings held on Monday 31st July 2023. Cllr Summerland proposed the minutes were accepted as a true record. This was seconded by Cllr Fulton-Urry. All agreed.

100/23 Matters Arising

119/22 Code of Conduct The Clerk has confirmed that the date of adoption of the earlier code was in June 2012. A copy of this was sent to Patrick Arran on 3rd August 2023 and his reply was forwarded to Councillors.

101/23 County Councillor's report Cllr Bartholomew's full report is attached to the minutes.

102/23 District Councillor's report Cllr Rawlins' report is attached to these minutes. The new Councillor Grants are now live and close in October although there is a second opportunity to apply in January 2024.

103/23 Financial Situation

103.01/23 The financial position had been circulated.

103.02/23 The August accounts were presented. Invoices to the value of £1,747.81 were authorised for payment, proposed by Cllr Fulton-Urry and seconded by Cllr Davis. The September payments with invoices of £2,020.62 were proposed by Cllr Summerland and seconded by Cllr Lacey. All agreed. **(Clerk to action)**

103.03/23 The Clerk reported that the Audit had been certified as correct. The certificate of completion will be placed on the website and the notice board.

104/23 Planning Matters

Applications GRANTED by SODC

Keepers Cottage Kiln Lane RG9 4EL P23/S2151/HH Enlargement of window on ground floor level west elevation and extension to tiled canopy to form new boiler room on west elevation.

8 Heathfield Close Binfield Heath RG9 4DS P23/S2213/HH Single storey rear extension and new side doorway.

Completed applications for ratification

Elm Tree Farm Common Lane Binfield Heath P23/S2203/HH Detached garage/carport. This was discussed and will be recommended for approval. Decision ratified. All agreed.

Binfield Heath Stores Arch Hill Binfield Heath RG9 4DU P23/S2237/FUL Proposal for two new

detached dwellings in the rear garden of Binfield Heath Stores including new shared driveway and entrance gates, accessed via Arch Hill. A response was made requesting a holding objection, pending further information. Decision ratified. All agreed.

Rosemary Cottage Shiplake Row Binfield Heath RG9 4DR P23/S2880/FUL Change of use of land to residential garden and erection of a timber pre-fabricated single storey granny annexe for ancillary use to the main dwelling. A majority recommended approval of this application. Decision ratified.

New Applications None

105/23 Neighbourhood Plan Cllr Davis had sent an update to the NP. The design guide is completed, The Steering group were advised to describe the seven Landscape Character areas in more detail. The list of non-designated heritage buildings has been expanded and there is a new listed building list.

Cllr Davis was thanked for his unceasing hard work to push forward with the Neighbourhood Plan.

106/23 Neighbourhood Watch Nothing to report.

107/23 Community Matters Arriva Buses approached the Parish Council for a meeting to discuss the buses. The Company wishes to use double decker buses on this route and that in order to maintain the service require the trees and high hedges to be cut back. One quotation has been received for the areas covered by the route via Binfield Heath, Dunsden Green and Playhatch. Another quotation will be sought. When the work is complete there may be a chance to obtain another bus through the village although it has been noted that the buses are not always reliable as the driver presumably forgets to come via Binfield Heath. EDPC will be asked if it could make a contribution to the cost of the hedge/tree cutting.

108/23 Highways/Transport and General Maintenance The Clerk was asked to contact Stuart Earl regarding the two small problems in Heathfield Avenue to see if a solution could be found as these are not covered by footpaths.

109/23 Green and Open Spaces Today there was a visit from the Chiltern Society footpath representative who has taken over the responsibility for the Binfield Heath footpaths. Robert Sherwood introduced himself and explained his role. The PC highlighted the problems with one or two of the local issues. Mr Sherwood was thanked for coming to the meeting.

110/23 Public Forum No public presence

111/23 Matters for future consideration Basketball net; gate from the recreation ground into Dunsden Way.

The meeting finished at 9.20pm.

Date of next meeting: Monday October 30th 2023 at the Scout Hut
(a week later than previously notified.)

REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS SEPTEMBER 2023 FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

GENERAL OCC REPORT

OCC APPLIES TO ITSELF FOR PLANNING PERMISSION – AND REFUSES IT

OCC has been awarded millions of pounds in Government funding to build roads and other necessary infrastructure to support housing in Didcot. It is known as the Housing Infrastructure Fund 1 (HIF1). Such construction requires planning permission, so OCC had to apply to itself for permission. Despite being Council policy backed by Cabinet and officers, the application was refused by the OCC planning committee. The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities subsequently called in the decision. This means there will be a review by the government-appointed planning inspectorate and the Secretary of State will take the final decision about whether to approve the application.

NATIONAL REVIEW OF LTNS AND 20MPH LIMITS

The prime Minister has ordered a review of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) and 20mph zones. The review will also consider increased funding for pothole repairs and examine town centre parking. The aim is to strike a balance between active travel schemes and not penalising motorists. The review will assess the impact of the schemes on the local economy and emergency services, and if necessary, the law may be changed to order their closure.

OXFORD SECTORISATION MONITORING AND EVALUATION PLAN PUBLISHED

Detailed plans for how OCC will monitor and evaluate the impact of splitting Oxford into four sectors by using “traffic filters” have now been published. The monitoring and evaluation plan sets out how the council will measure the predicted impacts of sectorisation, based on evidence. Sectorisation will be implemented as a trial under an experimental traffic regulation order (ETRO), expected to begin in autumn 2024, after Network Rail’s work to improve Oxford rail station is completed and Botley Road is re-opened. The proposals have been hugely controversial and the council hopes the monitoring and evaluation plan will dilute opposition. Documents are available to view on the council website:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-policies-and-plans/TrafficFilterMEPlanSummary.pdf>

FORMER “JUST STOP OIL ACTIVIST” APPOINTED BY OCC AS TREE OFFICER

A man from Stonesfield has been appointed as OCC’s Tree Officer, despite being punished with a 12-month community order in March for a Formula One track invasion at last year’s British Grand Prix. The man, along with five other protesters, was spared jail in March at Northampton Crown Court on but was found guilty of causing an immediate risk of serious harm by sitting in the face of fast-moving vehicles. He previously took part in Just Stop Oil antics in Oxford city centre in 2021 and hit out at the county council for a “complete lack of leadership on the climate crisis”. An OCC spokesman emphasised the officer was no longer involved with Just Stop Oil and his appointment was only made after a rigorous assessment.

NEW FIREFIGHTING EQUIPMENT LAUNCHED

Firefighters across Oxfordshire are now benefitting from new equipment consisting of improved face masks, body-shaped shoulder straps and hip belt, backplate and oxygen cylinders as part of OCC’s Fire and Rescue Service’s commitment to ensuring crews have the best protection.

TRIAL OF LONGER-LASTING ROAD SURFACE

A west Oxfordshire road in Middle Barton is being resurfaced with a high-performance material to test the product’s ability to increase the life of a highway. OCC is carrying out the trial in North Street, with its contractor Milestone Infrastructure and their partner Aggregate Industries to develop the use of Gipave – a Graphene Plus-enhanced asphalt. A 725-metre stretch of the road will be laid with Gipave, while an adjacent length of road will be resurfaced using conventional high-performance asphalt, so that the two surfaces can be compared accurately.

FREE ELECTRIC BLANKET TEST

Residents are being encouraged to take up the offer of a free electric blanket check, part of OCC’s programme to ensure everyone is safe, as well as warm, this winter. The electric blanket tests are normally very popular, with places limited, therefore, they must be **pre-booked**: by visiting <https://service.oxfordshire.gov.uk/blankettesting> or by calling 01865 895999 or by emailing duty.officer@oxfordshire.gov.uk The full list of dates and locations is provided below.

- Monday 18 September – Oxford City
- Tuesday 19 September – South Oxfordshire
- Wednesday 20 September – Cherwell
- Thursday 21 September – West Oxfordshire
- Friday 22 September – Vale of White Horse
- Monday 2 October – Oxford City
- Tuesday 3 October – South Oxfordshire
- Wednesday 4 October – Cherwell
- Thursday 5 October – West Oxfordshire
- Friday 6 October – Vale of White Horse

The actual address and a specific time slot will be provided at time of booking.

CHARGES FOR NON-HOUSEHOLD WASTE (DIY) AT OCC RECYCLING CENTRES

The Government has announced their intention to abolish charges on small amounts of DIY wastes brought to Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC’s) to help cut fly tipping. Larger amounts may still be charged

for. OCC is awaiting further information and guidance of when this will commence, until then all DIY charges across all of Oxfordshire's seven HWRC's remain in place. The Government's announcement did not abolish all charges but set a minimum level to be accepted for free, larger amounts will still be charged for. At present the Government have indicated that the amount of waste accepted for free will be as follows:

- the quantity of waste per visit must be no greater than two 50L rubble bags or 1 bulky or fitted item no larger than 2000mm x 750mm x 700mm, such as a bathtub.
- the waste must not be produced on a regular basis requiring HWRC visits more frequently than four times per household over a four-week period.

The abolition of the charges has been welcomed by the Conservative Opposition and many residents, but attacked by Green councillor Dr Pete Sudbury, OCC Cabinet Member for Climate Change, who said it did not make economic sense and would not solve fly tipping either. The abolition of charges was also attacked by Liberal Democrat County Councillor Freddie van Mierlo who is quoted in his local newspaper as saying: "A lot of people may perceive this as a good move but not everyone does DIY."

REDUNDANCY PAYMENTS OF £840K FOR JUST FOUR INDIVIDUALS

AT Full Council in July, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services confirmed that just four individuals received a total of £840k payments in respect of redundancy, PILON (pay in lieu of notice) and pension contributions. Overall, 36 members of staff were made redundant with a total bill well into seven figures.

SODC ward councillor's report Binfield Heath – 25th September 2023

Main news – HIF 1 / Planning update

At their meeting on 18 July, Oxfordshire County Council's Planning and Regulation Committee resolved to refuse planning permission for a package of transport schemes around Didcot known as HIF1. Although this is a county council responsibility, there are related implications for new development and infrastructure in South Oxfordshire. Delivery of some strategic and other sites require this infrastructure. The four elements of the HIF1 scheme are:

- A4130 dualling - linking Valley Park to Didcot Science Bridge.
- Didcot Science Bridge - a new bridge across the railway line and the former Didcot A power station site.
- Didcot to Culham River Crossing - a new link road and bridge over the River Thames.
- Clifton Hampden bypass - a new bypass to re-route traffic away from Clifton Hampden and Burcot. All four elements sought to include new high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure. There were 8 reasons given for refusal, including concerns about the design of the proposed bridge over the River Thames; the remained EA concerns and objections. Separately there are costing challenges because Covid and design delays, plus inflation – particularly for construction labour and materials has been significant. The project is costed at £296m of which UK Gov and existing developer s106 funding covers £270m; OCC has agreed to cover up to £30m to complete delivery.

Rather than allowing OCC to resolve the issues, Levelling Up Secretary Michael Gove has called in the application and in that process it will go to a Planning Inspector, although the SoS can disagree and vary the Inspector's decision. The presumption is that the SoS will want the application approved. There is some limited scope for changes through this process; indeed given the reasons and objections some are likely to be needed. There was a special SODC council meeting on 29th August. It was agreed that in principle the HIF1 infrastructure is needed promptly for the benefit of Didcot and the district, but should be of good sustainable design and to seek to support aims to become a net zero district by 2030, support biodiversity and minimise any harmful impact of the scheme on the district's natural and historic landscape, including the River Thames.

SODC Annual HLS Statement 2023

SODC has released its annual Housing Land Supply Statement (HLS) for 2023. Unfortunately this shows a supply of only 4.2 years – so less than the 5.0 year's supply target. There are a number of factors playing into this. Firstly SODC were forced to accept sky-high housing targets in its LP 2035 housing "need" trajectory; moreover as the plan years went on the trajectory not only set higher levels of requirement but also more of those were based on the assumption of supply from vast strategic sites. Secondly other external factors have applied – including Brexit and its consequence of less skilled construction workers and thus also higher rates of pay. Also Covid which did have some effect on construction delivery and on demand and caused some workers to become inactive. Also the Ukraine war that has caused disruption of supply chains and prompted high inflation of energy and foodstuffs in particular. Thirdly now a "cost-of-living crisis" – partly caused by the

factors above – with inflation outstripping earnings, much higher interest rates causing much higher mortgage costs, more difficulty in proving disposable income for mortgages, sharp reductions in house prices and also a sharp reduction in mortgage applications and viable housing demand has caused a loss of confidence amongst developers and builders. Finally, large strategic sites come with more issues to resolve – many are Greenfield sites needing core infrastructure including social, educational, health, core drainage utility and highways facilities. During the LP2035 process promoters claimed that they could deliver these sites – one of which was Grenoble Road on the edge of Oxford and part beneficially owned by Oxford City Council. The extra infrastructure required for that site was more modest than for others; yet still delivery is lagging behind. The consequence of all the above is that developers are taking a much more cautious view of their projected build-out rates. Coincidentally this may also help them in putting in new applications claiming lack of supply! SODC has done its best and indeed has granted planning permission to 5,380 homes that aren't yet built. There are another 16,000+ homes allocated in LP2035 in addition. So overall there is a pipeline of over 21,000 homes that have been given the green light in one form or another. There are unfortunately consequences from this situation: By contrast with the past the planning system now gives more weight to having an up-to-date Local Plan. However at present it is still the case that decision-makers including appeal inspectors are required to apply a “tilted balance” where there is a lack of a 5 year Housing Land Supply. Secretary of State Michael Gove has promised to remove the old 5 year HLS rule for decision making – provided that the Local Planning Authority has an up-to-date Local Plan. However despite expectations that a new NPPF to that effect would arrive in summer 2023 as yet it has not! It is rumoured that developers and land-owners are lobbying to pushback on such notions. Presently, if a neighbourhood has a Neighbourhood Plan which is current and within 2 years of being made AND the LPA has at least 3 years of HLS then the “tilted balance” does not apply. Secretary of State Michael Gove had promised to increase the two years to a much more sensible 5 years in a new NPPF. However, as noted above, as yet a new NPPF to that effect has not arrived!

News in brief

- **Councillor community grants**: A budget of £5,000 is available to each district councillor to fund initiatives aimed at restoring our natural world, and improving community wellbeing. Applications can be made by parish councils, and are made online. The deadline for this phase 1 (of 2) is 20 October 2023. Please do feel free to contact grants@southandvale.gov.uk for guidance.
- **Bathing water**: SODC is supporting Wallingford's application for bathing water status. Charity Thames21 are submitting the application and have launched a public consultation. Mike Giles recently spoke with Thames21 about potentially supporting theoretical future bids from Shiplake and/or Eye & Dunsden – they are open to doing so. However, they note that potential sites must meet certain criteria (including minimum swimmer numbers and some infrastructure).
- **Views sought on S. Oxon landscape character**: An online consultation hub has been launched for the 2023 update of landscape character evidence for South Oxfordshire District Council. The aim is to support the work of the Council and to underpin policies in the emerging Joint Local Plan by reviewing and refreshing landscape evidence. LUC are supporting SODC as consultants.
- **Work on the AONB extension** continues with parish reviews and work for the next phase by the consultants.
- **£50,000 fund for climate and nature**: SODC is funding a £50,000 grant pot for projects to enhance nature and biodiversity and access to it. Applications for grants between £1000 and £15000 should be made to The Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE). Deadline 2nd October. Contact: admin@trustforoxfordshire.org.uk
- **'Let it Bee' has been judged a success**: SODC allowed nature to take over at 17 specific sites in parks and open spaces to make them more bird, bee and butterfly friendly. Across these sites, council parks teams have reported an increase in the abundance of wildflowers and plants. (Where appropriate key walkways etc have been mown by exception.)
- **Covid-19**: At 13th September 2023, reported cases in SODC were at a weekly rate per 100k of population of 14 (it peaked at 1,504 on 6th January 2022) – a very low level - albeit that reporting may be somewhat incomplete. (Many don't report it.). However a new variant of interest has been identified: BA.2.86. The government have reacted by bringing forward inoculations for the vulnerable and 65+ groups – offering Covid and Flu jabs. There are a lot of mutations in the new variant but the risk not yet fully known.

Mike Giles & Leigh Rawlins
District Councillors