

BINFIELD HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Binfield Heath Parish Council May 23rd 2022

Present Cllr P Rollason, Cllr L Ransom, Cllr S Summerland, Cllr Hugh Lacey, Cllr Robert Davis, Cllr David Bartholomew (OCC & SODC), Cllr Leigh Rawlins (SODC) 2 residents.

01/21 Apologies for absence Cllr Sarah Fulton-Urry

02/21 Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 26th April 2021 These were tabled as they had been approved in April 2021.

03/21 Appointment of Chairman & Declaration of Office Cllr Rollason stood down. Cllr Ransom proposed that Cllr Rollason should remain as Chairman. This was seconded by Cllr Fulton-Urry. Cllr Rollason was duly elected as Chairman. All agreed.

04/21 Appointment of Vice Chairman & Declaration of Office Cllr Rollason proposed that Cllr Ransom should remain as Vice Chairman. This was seconded by Cllr Summerland. All agreed.

05/21 Councillors' declarations and responsibilities:

Cllr Summerland: reading documents

Cllr Lacey: planning

Cllr Ransom planning; website

Cllr Davis Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Fulton-Urry footpaths; (Neighbourhood Watch)

Cllr Rollason: recreation ground; allotments

06/21 County Councillor's Report Cllr Bartholomew's full report will be attached to these minutes.

07/21 District Councillor's Report Cllr Rawlins' report will be attached to these minutes.

08/21 Declarations of Interest None

09/21 Financial situation The financial position had been circulated.

The May accounts were presented. Invoices to the value of £were authorised for payment by BACS. These payments were proposed by Cllr Rollason and seconded by Cllr Summerland. All agreed.

(Clerk to action)

10/21 Date of next meeting This was discussed and it was decided that the next meeting would 20th June to give enough time to complete the external audit.

Present Cllr P Rollason, Cllr L Ransom, Cllr S Summerland, Cllr Hugh Lacey, Cllr Sarah Fulton-Urry, Cllr Robert Davis, Cllr Leigh Rawlins (SODC) and 20+ residents of Binfield Heath.

Chairman's Report The Chairman read his report:

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Cllr Robert Davis joined the PC last year and has taken over responsibility for the Neighbourhood Plan. This year he and a group of very dedicated volunteers have worked extremely hard to make some very good progress on the development of the plan. Tonight, Cllr Davis will update us on the progress.

RECREATION GROUND

The PC is very grateful for the group of volunteers who keep the recreation ground clear of rubbish and empty the bins on a weekly rota. One of our younger parishioners completed the volunteering section of his bronze Duke of Edinburgh's award by collecting rubbish over the last year. A resident also arranged a village litter pick with a group of volunteers for which the PC is grateful.

The safety check of the playground equipment showed that some had to be repaired or replaced. The order for the items was placed and unfortunately lost by the company. The was delayed but most work has now been completed.

The area at the bottom of Arch Hill has been cleared and the Scouts kindly planted bulbs along the banks of the River Binn. It is hoped to prevail on them again next autumn to plant some more. It is to be hoped that the residents who used to dump garden rubbish in the area will desist.

After the recent storm a large section of the fence had to be replaced.

DEFIBRILLATOR

With the remaining money donated by residents for BT Broadband, the PC has purchased a defibrillator for the village. It is awaiting mounting on the shop wall – a slight issue being that the wall is mainly flint.

WEBSITE

The PC is grateful to Mark Dodson for handling the website for many years. The website still needs to be compliant and a solution to this is still being sought by the PC.

GRANTS

Generous grants were made available by District and County Councillors for funding of the goal posts, and clearance of rough ground on both sides of the River Binn.

HIGHWAYS

OCC has been asked if the faded white lines near the shop and near the Bottle and Glass can be repainted. The work carried out at Coppid Crossroads continues to help with the avoidance of accidents.

ALLOTMENTS

One plot is available this year.

OCC/SODC

David Bartholomew (OCC) and Leigh Rawlins (SODC) have made significant contributions to our meetings throughout the year.

NB Is there a resident who would like to represent Binfield Heath on the Dunsden Hall Committee?

The Hall Manager is Naomi Baylis.

FLAGPOLE A flagpole has been purchased for the Platinum Jubilee.

BUS FIRE This is in the hands of the PC's insurance company.

Annual Financial Report The Clerk had forwarded her report:

The precept has been £14,000 since 2019. It is necessary to increase it for 2022-23 to ensure the success of the Neighbourhood Plan and to cover the major repairs necessary in the Recreation Ground. These repairs have been booked since January but are only just taking place.

The Neighbourhood Plan has been the cause of most of the expenditure but much of this was covered by the government grants available and these grants were all claimed.

The PC had ~£11,500 in the bank at the end of March. The grant towards the improvement of the River Binn (+£1100) helped towards the improvement of the area as the village is entered from the Sonning Common Rd. At the end of March the funds were just under £14,000.

VAT (£~4000) has been claimed and the accounts etc have been taken to the internal auditor. The PC will then submit the accounts to the external auditor.

Neighbourhood Development Plan Cllr Davis showed a short Powerpoint which explained the purpose, the history and the process so far in the development of a Neighbourhood Plan. He explained the three settlements with countryside in between. He encouraged those present to look at the posters around the hall giving more detail of the all the aspects involved. He welcomed anyone who would like to join the steering group and asked everyone to add their comments and put them in the box provided. Questions were invited.

Public Forum A question was asked about footpaths where after ploughing footpaths are not being restored. This item will be placed on the next PC agenda.

The next meeting is Monday 20th June

REPORT TO BINFIELD HEATH PARISH COUNCIL MAY 2022

FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

GENERAL OCC REPORT

CONDITION OF ROADS AND PAVEMENTS SHOULD BE THE TOP PRIORITY

An Ipsos survey ahead of the local elections found that 50% of people believe the condition of roads and pavements should be the top priority for councils. Regrettably, these matters do not feature in OCC's nine top priorities.

THE VEGANISM DEBATE ROLLS ON



The controversy about the administration's decision to offer only vegan meals at Full Council meetings continues. The first such meal on 5th April attracted local and national media attention, prompting critics to ask how it could be more climate-friendly to serve imported fruit and vegetables such as kiwi and mango, rather than locally produced meat and dairy products. Far too much time is being spent on this ideological distraction when the council faces significant challenges in areas more pertinent to its core functions.

TRANSGENDER RIGHTS MOTION

A LibDem councillor successfully moved a motion at the April meeting of Full Council dealing with a number of transgender issues and stating that one gender inclusive bathroom should be installed in every public building owned or operated by the Council. The Conservative Opposition abstained on the basis that: the topic was far too complex and sensitive for a short council debate; the motion didn't provide significant safeguards for women; and that the costs of the building works were unspecified and could run into six figures.

POLICE CRITICISE 20MPH SPEED LIMIT PROPOSALS

As previously reported, the administration is spending £8m on the cosmetic exercise of switching signs from 30mph to 20mph on 85% of the county's roads with a 30mph limit. The 20mph limit is in effect voluntary as it will not be enforced by the police. The measure has continued to attract police criticism and a spokesman said: *"There is a proven link between road environment and character and the speed of drivers. If it is not accepted as realistic it will quickly be abused and be the source of constant demands for police action. The police stance still reflects that 20mph limits and zones should be self-enforcing."* Press report [here](#).

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

Accommodation

The majority of the accommodation visits across the county have now either been carried out or booked in. The number of properties being rejected for overcrowding or poor housing conditions remains very low in every district. There are a small number of partially approved properties that are waiting for improvements. The number of properties where guests have arrived before the accommodation visit takes place is also very low. OCC will continue to book in visits for new host properties that enter the system over the next few weeks.

Community support

OCC has been working with Asylum Welcome to ensure that both hosts and Ukrainians have access to a network of support – and that it is as safe and effective as possible. Asylum Welcome is keeping a track of all offers of community support across the county. To make best use of this significant response, together, OCC is proposing to expand the community liaison officer resource available in each district and the city to coordinate, advise and refer guests to the support that is available to them, including across housing, education and health.

Schools

School places are being found for Ukrainian children. Applications for school places from guests are being considered alongside all other applications but we are working hard to ensure that places are offered as close as possible to where guests are living.

Health

The government has recently published some [guidance](#) to help primary health care professionals assess and address the health needs of Ukrainian guests.

Help with queries can be found here:

- Website: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ukraine
- Oxfordshire Ukraine helpline: +44 1865 966444 / 01865 966 444 (opening hours: 8.45am - 5pm, Monday to Friday. Closed weekends and bank holidays).
- Email: ukraineresponse@oxfordshire.gov.uk

OCC COMMITS TO ENABLING MORE TREES TO BE PLANTED

A change in approach will help increase the number of trees in Oxfordshire after a new policy with cross-party support was approved. The policy will put the emphasis on a 'presumption in favour of

trees. Bill Cotton, Oxfordshire County Council's Director of Environment & Place, said: "This is a bold and ambitious long-term policy to increase investment in trees across the county. Trees are valuable assets for so many reasons and we aim to give them more prominence when looking at areas including planning, transport, connectivity and health.

"We want to move away from simply maintaining and managing the trees on our land to actively encouraging and enabling more trees to be planted in both rural and urban settings. This can help tackle climate change and increase resilience to it, as well as improving people's quality of life – both now and in the future." One requirement of the policy is to plant two new trees for every tree that has to be removed from county council land. It also promises to explore new tree planting opportunities and extra investment to carry it out, stricter guidelines for those wanting to remove existing trees and implement proactive care to prolong the lives of established trees.

SPECIFIC OCC REPORT FOR BINFIELD HEATH

BUS INCIDENT 19TH MAY

I have asked the Emergency Planning Officer whose responsibility it is to replace the waste bins and am awaiting a response.

GENERAL SODC REPORT

COUNCIL MEETING FORMAT

As previously reported, the administration issued a notice stating: "Formal council meetings will continue as they have been until further notice." I have had many complaints about hybrid meetings where councillors, or members of the public, have to equip themselves with laptops and headsets then travel to Didcot to sit in rows talking into screens. Conservatives have been pressing for physical meetings return to normal and this is now likely to happen when SODC temporarily relocates to Abingdon.

PLANNING ENFORCEMENT STATEMENT

The Conservative Opposition is pressing for changes to this controversial new policy, especially the triage system and the block on enforcement updates to parish councils and residents.

SPECIFIC SODC REPORT FOR BINFIELD HEATH

P21/S4616/FUL ERECTION OF 11 DWELLINGS AT REAR OF CROSSWAYS This has been refused and has now gone to appeal in the footsteps of the earlier application for 20 houses.

P20/S2808/DIS: THAMES FARM I am not aware of any progress regarding this development which has effectively been abandoned for two years because of the drainage and dissolution feature issues which remain unresolved. I asked the SODC Deputy Chief Executive to write to Taylor Wimpey requesting that the site is tidied up.

P21/S4102/RM: RETIREMENT VILLAGE RESERVED MATTERS The developer has commenced works in advance of the 'Discharge of Conditions' and an enforcement investigation has begun.

SODC ward councillor's report Binfield Heath – 23rd May 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 May cases in SODC were reported as being down to a weekly rate per 100k of population of 107 (it peaked at 1,504 on 6th Jan) although it may be that reporting is incomplete. Indeed Reading BC have ceased reporting their figures because of fears about accuracy. It seems reasonable to assume that levels will remain low as we go into summer.

Elections in Oxfordshire 5th May

There were no elections in South Oxfordshire. In Vale of White Horse DC there was a by-election for Matt Barber's old seat (He was the former leader of VoWH until 2019). (He stood down on becoming Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley Police). His seat was won by the LibDems by a very clear margin (878 to 519) by Sally Povolotsky, who is also a county councillor. Vale of White Horse is dominated by the LibDems. In Oxford City 24 out of 48 seats were up for election and the closing position for the council became :- Labour 32 (-2), LibDem 9 (no change), Green 6 (+3) and Ind 1 (-1) – so despite some losses Labour remain dominant there. In Cherwell DC 16 out of 48 seats were up for election and the closing position became Con 25 (-5), Lab 10 (+1), LibDem 7 (+4), Green 2 (+1) and Ind 4 (no change) – so the Conservatives, just, retain control. In West Oxfordshire DC, 16 out of the 49 seats were up for election and the closing position became Con 20 (-7), Lab 9 (+1), LibDem 15 (+5), Green 2 (+1) and Ind 3 (no change). The Conservatives thus lost control and the council is to be led by Andy Graham (LibDem who defeated Ian Hudspeth in the Woodstock & Bladon seat at the County elections last year) in a partnership with the Greens and Labour. In April 2019 Oxford City was held by Labour in a sea of Conservative blue – including at the County Council. The position is now very different and when it comes to key issues of spatial planning and the level of desirable population and housing growth for our future. Moreover the renewed recognition of the need to rebalance the UK economy and to “level up” at national level starts to create scope for a changed direction of travel.

Ukraine

The local councils of Oxfordshire continue to work together to support Ukrainian refugees. As at 3rd May, 377 visas had been issued to Ukrainians fleeing the Russian invasion - who had sponsors in the South Oxfordshire area via the Homes for Ukraine scheme. More will no doubt follow. SODC will register hosts who can receive refugees and also vet the properties to ensure that they meet reasonable standards. There will also be a need to do DBS (enhanced level) safeguarding checks on hosts and those living there. SODC already have some 200 refugees. If residents would like to contribute to relief it is recommended that donations are made to the Disasters Emergency Committee online. The link is:-

https://www.dec.org.uk/?gclid=CjoKCQjwz7uRBhDRARIsAFqjulkn5K11ryFs9xQQoLwvss231BEfXsmrv2t32MdCrEB83ZpefccWiYMaAjQAEALw_wcB The Government (DLUHC) has suggested a scheme to contribute £350 per month to those who can accommodate refugees. Also where a householder is in receipt of a single-occupier discount this will not be lost if they become a host for Ukrainian refugees. Anyone who wishes to make a housing offer can contact the councils' (joint) housing team using the email: housing@southandvale.gov.uk.

AONB extension

On 20th April local parishes from Harpsden along to Kidmore End met to start to prepare a case to Natural England for an extension of the Chilterns AONB. Subject to parish confirmations, work will be prepared to integrate existing landscape studies, address any gaps and to prepare a robust case to Natural England as to why the nominated areas of extension are appropriate and fulfill the relevant criteria. A further meeting is to be held – probably in June – and Mapledurham parish will be invited to join in.

No Mow May

SODC is supporting biodiversity by avoiding mowing in May in areas supporting wildflowers etc wherever possible and encouraging others to enable wildflowers etc to bloom and support insects/wildlife at the key early-season period.

Joint Local Plan

SODC is underway with consultation and work on a new Joint Local Plan with Vale of White Horse DC. The councils are trialling an innovative new digital approach to this consultation. This enables users to explore more interactive online content and hopefully will find the approach to be quicker and more appropriate. The aim is to gain more responses for ordinary residents – as well as parishes and others. The consultation is open from Thursday 12 May until 11.59pm on Thursday 23 June 2022. This is the link : <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/localplan-and-planning-policies/local-plan-2041/>

Queen's Speech, Levelling Up and Planning Reforms

Changes to planning are expected, but as yet detail is emerging slowly. There is renewed support for a plan-led system and suggestions that the presumption in the NPPF should be amended to lean against sites which are contrary to the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan – even where there may not be a 5 year Housing Land Supply; this could potentially restrain speculative developers and rogue inspectors? Contrary to the suggestions made by Robert Jenrick there is clear support for local democracy and the role of councillors and Planning Authorities. It seems that the standard Method will be retained in some form – particularly for plan-making. The Duty-to-cooperate is to be revised and there will be more emphasis on regeneration. There is however a suggestion of requiring an “infrastructure levy” (locally set) to cover almost all infrastructure and affordable housing thus sharply limiting the scope for s106 obligations in future. I have a lot of fears about this suggestion. It could lead to the levy being unviable in some areas but not collecting enough elsewhere. Larger strategic greenfield sites offer a lot of land profit but also require a mass of infrastructure – roads and schools etc from first base; s106 is a much more effective tool in such cases. I also fear social housing being separated from market housing and the past evidence on that is far from encouraging. The devil will always be in the detail. We are also promised more detail on how regional policy and levelling up is to be made to work in practice.

SODC meetings system

SODC are vacating their very expensive (temporary post January 2015 fire at Crowmarsh) offices in Milton Park – using an opportunity in the lease to break the let. On a temporary basis a very small essential part of the office will relocate to Abbey House in Abingdon. Abbey House is an old and rather run-down office which has been occupied by Oxfordshire County Council but which they have long been scheduled to leave as not fitting their needs. As yet they remain there. In the context of the above and a future move to permanent offices expected to be in Didcot Gateway, near the station, officers are considering the best meeting system. The space at Abbey House will not support full meetings of council – so those will need to happen in hired locations. This implies that equipment might need to be mobile. The intent is to get back to more face-to-face meetings, but ideally with some capacity for virtual attendance – which has great benefits.

Energy rebate

The energy rebate of £150 for Bands A-D properties is being actioned. It is much simpler to do so for direct debit payers where the Council Tax account and Bank account have the same name. For residents who pay by other means much more administration is required to enable payment to the correct person.

Chair of SODC

At its annual council meeting on the 19th May Jo Robb (Green councillor for Woodcote and Rotherfield) stood down after her year in office and David Turner (veteran LibDem councillor for Chalgrove with 27 years’ service as a district councillor) became Chair for the year ahead. David has previously been Chair of both SODC and OCC. He has been a parish councillor and school governor for 41 years and formerly served as a county councillor for 24 years, being a life alderman of Oxfordshire. He is a keen fan of rugby and played both rugby and tennis competitively in his youth.

Leigh Rawlins

District Councillor