

EYE & DUNSDEN PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of a Meeting held on February 15th at 7.45pm at Dunsden Village Hall

Present: Cllrs David Woodward, Ian Pringle, Clive Leeke, David Bartholomew (OCC +SODC) and Leigh Rawlins (SODC)

018/22 Apologies for absence Naomi Baylis, Cllr Richard Berkley (Both due to Covid illness)

019/22 Declarations of interest None

020/22 Minutes of the last meeting David Woodward proposed that the minutes from the meetings on November 16th 2021 and January 18th 2022 were signed. This proposal was seconded by Ian Pringle. Both minutes were signed as an accurate record of both meetings.

021/22 Matters arising from the minutes

006/22 The decision to apply for a grant to purchase and plant three sweet chestnut trees on the village hall field was ratified. All agreed. The Clerk confirmed application submission.

017/22 The Chairman had shared the invitation from BHPC to attend The Big Lunch for the Jubilee on the newsletter; the invitation is also on the website. (See also item 034/22)

022/22 County Councillor's report Cllr Bartholomew summarised his local reports. The full report will be attached to the minutes. Cllr Bartholomew had spoken to the Road Safety Officer about speed checks to try to sort the ongoing problem of motorbikes racing along the Henley Rd. Cllr Berkley will decide on position and time period and the Clerk will request the check. Cllr Bartholomew suggested that it was carried out over 2 weekends. **(Vice Chairman & Clerk to action)** Ian Pringle asked if Cllr Bartholomew could expedite the remaining remedial work on Tagg and Sandpit Lane. Ian Pringle will send him details. **(Ian Pringle to action)**

023/22 District Councillor's Report Cllr Rawlins summarised his report which is attached to these minutes. New enforcement procedures were discussed and the online meeting that Councillor Ransom of BHPC had attended had had a positive response from those attending. Cllr Rawlins also promoted the idea of a new meeting of the group of local parishes working together to promote AONB extension.

024/22 Public Question Time/Correspondence A letter to Ian Pringle had been received from a resident of Tagg Lane the contents of which were noted.

025/22 Financial Position

025.01/22 The present financial situation had been previously circulated.

025.02/22 The decision to pay the invoices of the December 2021 and January 2022 was ratified.

025.03/22 The February accounts were presented for payment. Invoices to the value of £2,647.95 were agreed. Ian Pringle proposed the accounts be paid. This was seconded by David Woodward. **(Clerk to action)**

026/22 Planning Matters

Applications Granted:

P21/S4082/HH Erection of single storey utility and bedroom extension. The Gallery Playhatch Road Sonning Eye RG4 6TU

Appeals:

P20/S4677/FUL Appeal dismissed

P21/S4648/LDP Appeal consultation

027/22 Eye & Dunsden Village Hall A new manager for the village Hall is being sought.

028/22 Neighbourhood Development Plan

028.01/22 TVERC is to undertake a Green Corridor Study.

028.02/22 It was agreed that the NDP could access the £5000 grant from the Parish Council prior to April if necessary.

029/22 Community Orchard More tree guards have been purchased to protect the fruit trees.

030/22 Highways, Footpaths & Open Spaces

030.01/22 Signage in Sonning Eye deferred

030.02/22 Playhatch permissive path deferred until March

030.03/22 Light in phone box. The Clerk was asked to purchase a BT key and then find an electrician to change the present light for the previously purchased LED unit. **(Clerk to action)**

030.04/22 The Clerk was asked to obtain a quotation for the repair of the doors on the notice board at Playhatch. **(Clerk to action)**

031/22 Allotments The Clerk has chased the last tenant for his rent.

032/22 Website Naomi Baylis is looking at the website and is getting quotes for compliance. Alternatively, a template has been found which is said to be WCAG compliant

033/22 Minerals/Playhatch & Sonning pit Liaison Groups.

033.01/22 Sandpit & Tagg Lane. It is to be hoped that Highways complete the promised remaining work soon.

033.02/22 The Clerk will reply to Chris Dance re the need for a Zoom meeting. **(Clerk to action)**

033.03/22 The Clerk was asked to report to Tarmac that some residents have written to say that they think that the Eye Marsh Drain is blocked. **(Clerk to action)**

034/22 Platinum Jubilee

034.01/22 The Clerk confirmed that the application for a grant to plant trees for this celebration had been submitted.

034.02/22 The Clerk was asked to research renting or purchasing a beacon to be erected on the field outside the village hall and set alight for the Jubilee. **(Clerk to action)**

035/22 Possible Dunsden Conservation Area The Clerk was asked to write to the Conservation Officer at SODC to enquire about the process for designating a section of a parish as a Conservation Area. **(Clerk to action)**

Matters for future consideration Various signage

Next meeting: March 15th 2022

REPORT TO EYE & DUNSDEN PARISH COUNCIL FEB 2022

FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

GENERAL OCC REPORT

BUDGET

As previously reported, the administration is proposing a large 5% rise in Council Tax. This is disappointing as the previous Conservative-led administration had put in place a Financial Strategy featuring a maximum of a 4% increase in Council Tax for 22/23. The budget includes a large £88m borrowing programme which will cost the council £5.3m a year to service, equivalent to 1.3% of Council Tax receipts. The Budget goes to Full Council for approval on 8th February.

OCC AND CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL TO END FORMAL PARTNERSHIP

The Leader issued an email to all councillors on 18th January, praising the partnership between OCC and Cherwell District Council but also announcing subject to council approval, it was going to end – without giving a reason why. The arrangement between the two councils, which has taken the form of joint services under a single chief executive, has been in place since September 2018. The ending of the partnership would mean that joint chief executive Yvonne Rees will return to her substantive post as CEO for Cherwell District Council from the date of both full council decisions. Recruitment will take place for the post of chief executive for OCC. The costs to the council have not been published, nor the reasons behind the decision made clear. Joint services would remain in place while new arrangements are finalised.

FOCUS ON CITY OF OXFORD & ENVIRONS

A number of measures focusing on the city of Oxford and the immediate area have been announced. These include: Oxford Quickway cycle routes; Face-to-face customer services moving to Westgate library; Cycling and walking improvements for Kidlington; Consultation on Oxford United's request for council land near Kidlington; Work to improve Marsh Lane in Oxford; East Oxford Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs); LTN enforcement cameras in Cowley; Oxford Zero Emission Zone (ZEZ).

OXFORD TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT SPY CAMERAS

OCC's Cabinet has voted to apply to the government for permission to use spy cameras to enforce traffic regulations in Oxford, including stopping in yellow box junctions, illegal turns, and vehicle restrictions, at specific sites. The first proposed locations are: Oriel Square, Cornmarket Street, Turl Street, Broad Street, High Street, Barton Park, Holywell Street /Longwall Street, New College Lane/Queens Lane, Gloucester Street, Botley Interchange, Hinksey Hill Interchange. Fines will be retained by OCC.

WALLINGFORD CENTRAL BECOMES LATEST 20MPH PILOT SITE

Wallingford Central has become the third 20mph pilot scheme to be unveiled in Oxfordshire. OCC completed the work earlier this month as part of its £8m plans to reduce the speed of the majority of the county's 30mph roads to 20mph, where suitable and when supported by local residents. It followed the installation of 20mph pilot schemes in Cuxham and Long Wittenham in 2021, with more pilot sites planned for Wallingford North and Kirtlington later this year. Through the Localities Group of local councillors, I have asked for clarity about how the success/failure of these pilot schemes will be measured. In particular, I have asked if speed surveys are being undertaken before and after their introduction. It must be remembered that compliance by motorists is effectively voluntary as it will not be enforced by the police.

SPECIFIC OCC REPORT FOR EYE & DUNSDEN

MOTORBIKE RACING ON A4155

This is a matter for the police, but as advised at the last meeting, I can assist with arranging a speed survey, if required. I asked the OCC Road Safety Officer anthony.kirkwood@oxfordshire.gov.uk for his views and he agreed the survey would be a good idea. He has suggested contacting his colleagues below for costs:

mark.prestwood@oxfordshire.gov.uk

richard.bowman@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Please copy me in on any emails.

MAKE HENLEY SHINE CAMPAIGN (ILLUMINATING HENLEY BRIDGE)

As previously advised, a campaign in support of illuminating Henley Bridge is gaining momentum, resulting in positive noises coming from OCC. However, I am aware that many parish councils and residents are in support of 'dark skies' and are opposed to unnecessary illumination and consequent light pollution; indeed, this is my own view. Provisionally, I intend to OPPOSE the illumination proposals but welcome input from parish councils before coming to a final decision. Should the PC wish to make its views known to OCC, the relevant emails are: nick.mottramr@oxfordshire.gov.uk (officer for culture/heritage) neil.fawcett@oxfordshire.gov.uk (Cabinet Member for Cultural Services)

GENERAL SODC REPORT

COUNCILLOR GRANT SCHEME

Cllr Rawlins and I are working cooperatively to fairly distribute grants across the five parishes in our Ward.

SPECIFIC SODC REPORT FOR EYE & DUNSDEN

P20/S3501/FUL-3: CHANGE OF USE OF LAKE FOR RECREATION/SPORTS PURPOSES

The application has been refused, but an appeal is anticipated. A full report is available on the SODC website. As this was a retrospective application, SODC Enforcement has opened a file and officer Julie Perrin has been allocated to the case. I continue to receive complaints about activities at this site.

SODC WARD COUNCILLOR'S REPORT EYE & DUNSDEN – 15th FEB 2022

Covid-19

Following the national pattern Covid cases have fallen back somewhat. At 08/02/2022, Oxford City was at a weekly rate of 1,228 per 100k population (it peaked at 1,504 on 6th Jan.). By comparison, Cherwell DC was 955 (peak was 18,826 on 3rd Jan.), West Oxon DC at 843 (peak was 1,565 on 3rd Jan.), SODC at 919 (peak was 1,522 on 3rd Jan.) and Vale of WH DC at 854 (peak was 1,565 on 3rd Jan.). Reading BC (to 8th February 2022) was at 1,116 having peaked at 1,780 on 4th Jan. These levels are still quite high; by way of comparison at 4th November SODC was at 363 and by the 3rd December was at 764 – now at 8th February at 919 weekly per 100k of population! That said, they are falling and incidences are mostly mild for those with boosted vaccinations and those with antibodies. It is clear that the vaccinations and natural antibodies are reducing the hospitalisation

rate and death rate of Omicron. Happily hospitalisations have fallen back, but are still significant at a time when the NHS faces strong demand from the previous backlog of conditions and other seasonal pressures. The government has now withdrawn legal restrictions - except the requirement to isolate. Government have now amended the requirement to self-isolate with a positive Covid test to be only be 5 days – subject to clear LFT tests on days 5 and 6 (in advance of re-emerging). Indeed there is now the prospect that even this may be withdrawn in the near future. Some transport operators and businesses still require use of masks. Boosters and vaccinations continue. Whatever the rules may be, the advice must still be to proceed with caution and to protect the more vulnerable.

Climate Action Plan

SODC are set to adopt its first Climate Action Plan. The plan is intended to be a living and evolving one. It focuses on the actions that the council can take directly, but also on encouraging and enabling action by residents and others.

SODC Budget

As noted previously, a host of poor decisions in the past had eroded SODC's reserves by many millions of pounds and built an ongoing annual deficit that was set to grow to the point that usable revenue reserves would have been exhausted. It was also the case that the Crowmarsh fire of January 2015 created new capital and revenue pressures – without a sufficiently swift response. Since 2019 a series of steps have been taken to seek to improve matters and to restore a philosophy plus an action programme towards sound finance. In 2019/20 the forecast for 2023/24 was for a deficit of £(6.1)m closing General revenue reserves of £4.0m (less than a year's worth) and an empty capital receipts reserve (forcing routine capital renewal to fall against the inadequate revenue reserve. (SODC did of course hold other funds that were earmarked for CIL/s106 projects etc). This was not a good situation. The programme of action has of course been somewhat disrupted by the impact of Covid. However the draft 2022/23 budget forecast for 2023/24 is for a deficit of £(1.8)m and a revenue reserve of £23.8m. Unfortunately because it has the 8th lowest Band D Council Tax charge for a Shire District in England (despite being in the expensive South East) SODC incurs more cost than income for extra dwellings (and associated population); albeit that this effect is temporarily offset by "New Homes Bonus" (NHB) – which is overtly subject to a government review. So, this effect increases net costs over time; together with the propensity for government to impose ever more statutory obligations and associated costs. This year the draft 2022-23 budget forecasts a deficit of £(3.0)m for 2026-27, closing that year with £18.4m of General revenue reserves and also £4.3m of capital receipts reserve. The budget includes appropriate increases in charges and fees and curtailment of expenditure. Much of the benefits come from the sound decisions that have been made. These include the costs-saving of a JLP, correcting some outsourcing problems and investing in assets that save costs. The budget provides an outline envelope to address SODC's office problem after the Crowmarsh fire and thus reduce the deficit effect from the use of the temporary and highly expensive Milton Park offices. Using savings the budget also provides for a programme of action in the wake of Covid delays and impacts. Community well-being, deep cleans, litter and children's activity. Tree planting and supporting the nature of our district. Climate change support for skills and initiatives. All directed to the high value of our district in what will of course be the Jubilee year. The government have further deferred a promised "Fair Funding Framework" whereby Local Government can plan ahead for their finances with less uncertainty. There are risks that reviews of funding may cut the levels of central government grant and NHB to councils like SODC in favour of "levelling up" and deprivation. If so they would cause difficulties for the council. The draft budget proposes an increase of £5 for a Band D property – in line with government guidance. Clearly SODC continues to run a deficit in the draft budget – but a much reduced one. There is more to do in the future but there is also a clear direction of travel towards a return to sound finance.

Planning Enforcement

On Wednesday 26th January a presentation meeting was held for Towns and Parishes on Enforcement. The feedback I have heard was excellent. After all the debate some of the attendees were a bit sceptical going into the session but came out impressed and feeling that the proposed approach was correct and positive. Amongst others who attended was Lis Ransom from Binfield Heath. She was kind enough to write to say how pleased she was with the session. She felt that the original communication could have been better but *that "When properly explained by Anne and Emma it came across quite differently, a logical triage approach."* (Emma Turner and Anne-Marie Simpson)

Leigh Rawlins District Councillor