

EYE & DUNSDEN PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of a Meeting held on July 19th at 7.45pm at Dunsden Village Hall

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

095/22 Apologies for absence Cllrs Richard Berkley, Naomi Baylis.

096/22 Declarations of interest No new declarations

097/22 Minutes of the last meetings The minutes of June 21st 2022 were accepted as a true record.

098/22 Matters arising from the minutes

048.05/22 The Vice Chairman is to look at the Playhatch noticeboard with a view to removing the broken doors and leaving it open. **(Vice Chairman to action)** Deferred. Another quotation is being sought.

089.03/22 Playhatch permissive path. The possibility of a permissive path between Playhatch and the Flowing Spring is to be considered. **(Vice Chairman to action)** Deferred.

089.07/22 To stop people using the main road, the Chairman suggested a sign on the pedestrian gate to show Pedestrian Route to the River. The Chairman had designed the sign but as the gate is not visible from the road the Clerk was asked to request a cost and order a 1 1/2m high post to indicate the route to the river away from the road. **(Chairman/Clerk to action)**

099/22 County Councillor's report Cllr Bartholomew summarised his local reports. The full report will be attached to the minutes. Cllr Bartholomew said that Tarmac was willing to engage with the PC.

100/22 District Councillor's Report Cllr Rawlins summarised his report which is attached to these minutes.

101/22 Public Question Time/Correspondence None

102/22 Financial Position

102.01/22 The present financial situation had been previously circulated.

102.02/22 The July accounts were presented. Invoices to the value of £954.47 were authorised for payment. These payments were proposed by Ian Pringle and seconded by David Woodward. All agreed. **(Clerk to action)** The Clerk explained the problem with misreading the meter at Spring Lane allotments resulting in a DD payment demand of over £4000. The Clerk awaits a revised invoice and a revised DD payment.

103/22 Planning Matters

New Applications:

P22/S1301/FUL Demolition of the existing bungalow and the construction of a four bedroom dwelling. (Amended plans received 30 May 2022, Flood risk assessment received and Preliminary bat survey received 6 June 2022.) Lydden Sonning Eye RG4 6TN. *Application withdrawn.*

P21/S3122/FUL Amendment No 1-dated 23rd 2022. Erection of an Agricultural barn (as amended to reduce size of the building). Pauline's Field Sonning Eye RG4 6TN A response will be sent.

P22/S2354/FUL Erect a new fence behind an existing wall. Mill Farm Sonning Eye Sonning RG4 6TR This was discussed and a response will be prepared by a working party.

Applications Granted: None

104/22 Eye & Dunsden Village Hall

105/22 Neighbourhood Development Plan An initial draft plan has been received. However, there are a number of changes & corrections required. The next meeting is on Monday 25th July.

106/22 Community Orchard Nothing to report

107/22 Highways, Footpaths & Open Spaces

107.04/22 The Clerk was asked to report that the towpath at Sonning Eye over the footbridge on the Oxon bank needed a litter pick. **(Clerk to action)**

108/22 Allotments One spare allotment available. The Clerk will consider a tenant out of catchment. **(Clerk to action)**

109/22 Website deferred as Naomi Baylis is on maternity leave.

110/22 Minerals/Playhatch & Sonning pit Liaison Groups. Cllr Bartholomew had provided the PC with some links to County Officers in respect of issues at Area A.

111/22 Code of Conduct The training for this is August 18th so this item was deferred. The Clerk will resend the Code of Conduct to all councillors. **(Clerk to action)**

Matters for future consideration Various signage matters; Code of conduct

Next meeting: Tuesday 20th September

REPORT TO EYE & DUNSDEN PARISH COUNCIL JULY 2022

FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

GENERAL OCC REPORT

The Conservative Opposition remains concerned that the ruling LibDem/Green/Labour administration continues with its Oxford-centric focus and is pursuing ideological ambitions beyond the remit of the council – and at unknown cost.

STARTLING £12,000 SPENT ON REPAIRS TO OXFORD LTNS IN JUST A MONTH

A startling £12,000 has been spent by OCC on repairs to bollards and planters in the new East Oxford Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) scheme in its first month of installation. There have been reports of repeated vandalism of planters, and bollards have been knocked down or pulled out of the ground by opponents of the scheme who feel they have been ignored. OCC has pledged to keep replacing them. Residents in Oxfordshire's towns and villages may wonder why such freely available money is not spent on rural roads where it is needed, rather than imposing a scheme unwanted by many city residents.

AMBITION TO ELIMINATE ALL ROAD DEATHS AND SERIOUS INJURIES BY 2050

A commitment to Vision Zero – the elimination of deaths and serious injuries from road traffic collisions in Oxfordshire – has been agreed by OCC's Cabinet. The council has set interim targets of a 25 per cent cut in casualties by 2026 and a 50 per cent reduction by 2030 before aiming to reach zero by 2050. Although a laudable ambition, the Conservative Opposition is questioning whether such a target is achievable and what the associated costs are going to be.

OCC LEADER PLEDGES TO MEET AIR POLLUTION TARGETS AHEAD OF GOVERNMENT

OCC Leader Cllr Liz Leffman has signed a letter to the UK Environment Secretary George Eustice pledging to meet World Health Organisation (WHO) targets on deadly air pollution 10 years ahead of [the Government's 2040 deadline](#). Another laudable ambition, but many will question whether the council is working beyond its remit and is attempting to reach another impossible goal at unknown cost.

OCC TO SEEK INSIGHTS TO GUIDE ITS POLICIES ON TRANSGENDER SUPPORT

OCC is to consult local people to gather insight to guide future policies to support transgender residents. The engagement work follows a [motion agreed](#) at a Full Council on 5 April. The resulting action plan would be implemented over the coming years. This approach was agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 21 June. OCC is proposing to set up focused engagement with residents, utilising methods such as Lived Experience conversations, youth forums and the annual residents' survey, to gather insight that will support the development and delivery of new policies. The council also plans to commission research led by Healthwatch Oxfordshire to engage transgender residents and capture their experiences. Cabinet has approved a review of bathroom facilities in council buildings. The Conservative Opposition supports equality for all residents but has concerns about the amount of resource being devoted to these matters which affect less than 1% of the population, given that the council already has robust equality policies.

RAINBOW STEPS

Complaints were received after steps to the part of County Hall that is a listed building were painted in rainbow colours by OCC to support gay pride. Officers confirmed washable paint or chalk had been used and no damage had been done.

POLICE WILL NOT ENFORCE 20MPH SPEED LIMITS

Thames Valley Police has re-stated its stance on 20mph limits. The following objection was recorded in [a recent OCC officer report](#):

"The current speed of traffic is a reliable indicator of how acceptable a new speed limit would be. If the mean speed is over the proposed limit it is unlikely to be effective without other measures such as engineering or continual enforcement. There is a proven link between road environment/character and drivers speed. Drivers must respect the need for a speed limit. 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 still be self-enforcing. The policy of Thames Valley Police is to use sound practical and realistic criteria (Circular Roads 1/2013) when responding to Highway Authorities in an effort to promote consistency and to reduce the burden of constant and unnecessary enforcement."

In a [separate report](#), the police noted:

"If a speed limit is set too low and is ignored then this could result in the vulnerable road user being less safe and cause the majority of drivers to criminalise themselves and could bring the system of speed limits into disrepute. There should be no expectation that the police would be able to provide regular enforcement if a speed limit is set too low as this could result in an unreasonable additional demand on police resources. It is also important to set reasonable speed limits to ensure consistency across the country."

Although 20mph speed limits are welcomed by some parish councils, these police statements do call into question the wisdom of OCC's £8m cosmetic speed-limit sign-changing exercise.

ATTENDING COUNCILLOR MEETINGS REMOTELY

In his weekly update, Stephen Chandler, Interim Chief Executive Officer, has confirmed all non-statutory OCC councillor meetings will continue to be held either virtually or hybrid.

ATTEMPT TO REVERSE IMPOSITION OF VEGAN MEALS

Conservative Councillor Yvonne Constance will ask members at a full meeting of the council in July to reinstate meat and dairy on to the menu and to support local producers. This follows the decision to move to a vegan offer earlier this year and the subsequent controversy surrounding the provenance of the vegan dishes. Cllr Constance will tell colleagues: "Given the privileged position in which this Council finds itself and the potentially damaging effects of its motion dated 14 December, 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 Cllr Constance's motion, will say: "We are not opposed to vegan food, but we do want to help our local producers and serve local food rather than flying in mangoes from abroad. And we want there to be a choice. It is not right to impose personal dietary opinions on others. We are happy to be educated about veganism, but people still must be allowed to make their own choice as to what they do or do not want to eat."

SPECIFIC OCC REPORT FOR EYE & DUNSDEN

P22/S1691/FULCHANGE OF USE OF LAKE

As with the previous application for this proposal (P20/S3501/FUL), OCC objects to the application in relation to highway and drainage matters and reiterates that there is a conflict between the proposals and the S106 agreements relating to Caversham Quarry.

GENERAL SODC REPORT

STAFFING ALLOCATION

I have submitted a written question to Cabinet Member for Cllr Powell as follows: *"At the Full Council meeting in May you announced there will be six new FTE officers in the core climate action team. What is the annual cost of this to the council and what exactly are these officers going to do?"* My view is that the council could make better use of its resources by appointing more planning officers to get on top of the Enforcement backlog.

SPECIFIC SODC REPORT FOR EYE & DUNSDEN

P20/S3501/FUL & P22/S1691/FULCHANGE OF USE OF LAKE

I have had this message from the planning officer:

"A revised planning application has been submitted, which the owner claims is supported by

information addressing the previous reasons for refusal. They advised me that they will also now address those additional issues that I raised on site. The need for enforcement action is informed by the same planning issues that go into assessing a planning application. Therefore, no further consideration will be given to enforcement action until such time as the revised planning application has been determined. That determination will in turn inform the enforcement process."

SODC ward councillor's report Eye & Dunsden – 19th July 2022

Covid-19 The reliability of data on Covid cases is now much reduced following the end of test and trace. However national figures do not suggest a large surge, this appears to be supported by hospital data and makes sense for this time of year. At 8th July, reported cases in SODC were at to a weekly rate per 100k of population of 395 (it peaked at 1,504 on 6th Jan and it had troughed to 430 on 27th February, before rising again to 1207 on 28th March then falling back to 71 on 29th May). So there is a clear increase following the Jubilee - although it may be that reporting is incomplete. Indeed Reading BC have ceased reporting their figures because of fears about accuracy. It is anticipated that national numbers are likely to plateau and fall back as we go through summer. Over 50s will be offered a further Covid booster and flu jab in the autumn.

Ukraine Refugee arrivals continue to arrive as the war in Ukraine goes on.

Energy rebate The energy rebate of £150 for Bands A-D properties has been 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. Where payment details have not been forthcoming credit has had to be made as last resort to the relevant Council Tax accounts. Staff are now moving on to progress the (overall much smaller) discretionary scheme covering bands E-H. There's more information on the SODC website at southoxon.gov.uk/counciltaxrebate

Councillor community grant scheme The 2022/23 scheme is now for its first round (of 2). The first round closes on 1st September but there will be a second round for the same fund which may close at the end of January 2023. The overall value is as in previous years.

Household support fund SODC has opened a voucher scheme to support households who can't afford to pay for life's essentials. The scheme is part of the Government's Household Support Fund (HSF) which was extended by the chancellor in the recent budget. A portion of funds allocated to Oxfordshire County Council have been allocated to SODC as part of a wider support package across the county, which includes help for children eligible for free school meals through the holidays. Funding is limited and the scheme is open initially to people who have not had support from it before. However, the councils will open it to second applications if funds remain.

Electric Vehicle (EV) charging A number of parishes have asked for information relating to installing EV charging – with suitable supply and payment. Generally car parks are suggested rather than on-street bollards. Where homes lack off-road parking then the prospect of an EV vehicle is more challenging and the availability of public charging points is particularly relevant and there are some support funds. I am not sure if there is interest in this from the parish council? If so please let me know.

AONB extension An AONB extension meeting was held on the evening of 22nd June at 6pm in Dunsden village hall. Local parishes from Harpsden along to Kidmore End (and now including Mapledurham PC) are meeting 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. It was agreed to write a brief to commission the necessary landscape assessment work – to integrate assessments from existing Neighbourhood Plans and to address some known gaps. An overview map will be put together to integrate all the areas under consideration – showing the existing AONB area, the

proposed new extended area and other key information such as parish/Reading boundaries and the formal landscape types (E.g. such as “Semi-enclosed dip slope”). The next meeting will be on 28th July.

Enforcement SODC’s enforcement team is very well staffed by comparison with other authorities. They are working through the Covid backlog.

Climate change and diversity team Staffing has been reorganised to bring activity together. Climate change is being addressed alongside related extra obligations arising from new obligations arising from things like the new Environment Act and expected developments in planning. A number of staff (some existing permanent and some on limited-time secondment) have been reorganised into one group to address a range of issues around a common climate and environment theme – related to planning, environment, biodiversity and mitigation – including developing retrofit information and understanding together with tree-planting and habitat support - within the council’s scope to act.

Leigh Rawlins
District Councillor