

EYE & DUNSDEN PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of a Meeting held on September 27th at 7.45pm at Dunsden Village Hall

Present: Cllrs David Woodward, Ian Pringle, Richard Berkley, Naomi Baylis, David Bartholomew (OCC + SODC) and Leigh Rawlins (SODC)

112/22 Apologies for absence

113/22 Declarations of interest No new declarations

114/22 Minutes of the last meetings The Chairman proposed that the minutes of July 19th 2022 were accepted as a true record. This was seconded by Ian Pringle.

115/22 Matters arising from the minutes

048.05/22 The Vice Chairman has looked at the Playhatch bus shelter. Expenditure of £100 materials were agreed for its repair. **(Vice Chairman to action)**

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)**

089.07/22 The new sign on the pedestrian gate to show Pedestrian Route to the River was promptly removed by someone unknown. A finger post is now agreed by OCC and will be placed on the verge to indicate the safe route to the river away from the road.

116/22 County Councillor's report Cllr Bartholomew summarised his local reports. The full report will be attached to the minutes.

117/22 District Councillor's Report Cllr Rawlins summarised his report which is attached to these minutes. The extension to the AONB was discussed. All local Parish Councils have been asked to agree to jointly fund a landscape value assessment to support the application for the extension. The next meeting of the parishes is 25th October.

118/22 Public Question Time/Correspondence

118.01/22 A resident had highlighted the danger of youngsters jumping from the Sonning bridges into the river during the summer. The fire service is actively trying to make the situation safer. Also highlighted was the fact that the bins overflow with litter at Furleigh Bank. It was decided to try to tackle this issue. **(Clerk to action)**

118.02/22 It has been reported on social media that shooting had been taking place on a local footpath near Comp Farm. **(Clerk to action)**

118.03/22 A resident had contacted the Parish Council regarding the outstanding potholes and the height of the nettles and thistles on the verges causing visibility issues. The potholes have now been filled and the Parish Council will request that the verges are cleared. **(Clerk to action)**

119/22 Financial Position

119.01/22 The present financial situation had been previously circulated.

119.02/22 The August & September accounts were presented. Invoices to the value of £619.96 and £1676.87 were authorised for payment. These payments were proposed by Ian Pringle and seconded by Richard Berkley. All agreed. **(Clerk to action)**

120/22 Planning Matters

New Applications:

P22/S2916/FUL Demolition of the existing bungalow and the construction of a four-bedroom dwelling. Lydden Sonning Eye RG4 6TN

Applications Refused:

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

Applications Granted: None

121/22 Eye & Dunsden Village Hall The sweet chestnut trees purchased with a Councillor Community Grant are now planted in the field beyond the Village Hall. A sign will be designed to indicate these were planted in memory of Her Majesty the Queen. **(Chairman to action)**

122/22 Neighbourhood Development Plan The first draft of the Neighbourhood Development Plan is out to the steering group for comments prior to going to SODC for their comments.

123/22 Community Orchard The grass has been cut and the contractor will be asked to undertake this twice a year. **(Clerk to action)** A working party is arranged to take place in October.

124/22 Highways, Footpaths & Open Spaces

124.01 Playhatch permissive path See **Matters Arising**

124.02 Storm Water Drains in Playhatch: These are blocked again. The Clerk was asked to report this. **(Clerk to action)**

124.03 A sign is to be placed on the Furleigh Bank Car Park to indicate that there is to be no overnight parking and that offending vehicles will be removed. **(Chairman to action)**

124.04 The Chairman suggested two pedestrian signs to show pedestrians crossing between the Flowing Spring and the steps to the footpath entrance could be purchased. **(Clerk to action)**

124.05 The grass area around the Playhatch bus stop and telephone kiosk and the area along the Henley Road to the Thames Water entrance becomes very long and untidy in the summer and needs a monthly trim by the contractors. **(Clerk to action)**

124.06 The telephone kiosk at Playhatch is being vandalised. The Clerk was asked to investigate the possible purchase of the kiosk. **(Clerk to action)**

125/22 Allotments The allotments are all let. Rent renewals have been sent out.

126/22 Website Naomi Baylis has contacted Henley Town Council and has contacted the company for a quotation.

127/22 Minerals/Playhatch & Sonning pit Liaison Groups. There is a meeting with Tarmac on Thursday 6th October.

128/22 Code of Conduct The Clerk had attended the training for the Code of Conduct. Adoption of this was agreed by all councillors present. **(Clerk to action)**

Matters for future consideration

Next meeting: Tuesday to be confirmed

REPORT TO EYE & DUNSDEN PARISH COUNCIL SEPT 2022 **FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW**

GENERAL OCC REPORT

The Conservative Opposition remains concerned that the LibDem/Green/Labour coalition running the county council continues to pursue ideological objectives way beyond the remit of the council, the core functions of which are: adult & children's social care; education & learning; and highways.

PROTESTS AGAINST DRAG QUEEN STORY TIME FOR CHILDREN AT LIBRAIRIES



As previously reported, the planned drag queen story time classes for primary school children in council libraries sparked fury from many parents. The events took place during August provoking demonstrations and counter-demonstrations with a heavy police presence. Without going into the detail of the debate, Conservatives are asking voters who switched their vote to the LibDems if this is the type of thing they want the council to get involved in, or whether it should focus on the fundamentals of running local government.

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 believed to be coming back to Full Council in September. 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 under the guise of climate action. 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. The alliance is urging councillors to withdraw from the campaign which encourages residents to give up meat and adopt a plant-based diet. 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 September, 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." I am seconding the motion and 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."

KENT COUNCIL FINDS 20MPH ZONES DO NOT PROMPT LESS CAR USE

The introduction of a 20mph speed limit zone did not encourage people to ditch their cars, an independent report for Kent County Council has found. The local authority implemented the lower speeds in Faversham and Tonbridge as a trial in September 2020 in an effort to encourage more cycling and walking in the market towns. However, the recent report from transport consultants Agilysys said:

"Car usage remained virtually unchanged following the introduction of the 20mph limits".

Conservatives are going to ask the administration whether this new information will have any impact on OCC's plans to spend £8m changing signs from 30mph to 20mph in Oxfordshire. As reported last month, data from the Cuxham trial in Oxfordshire showed that the introduction of a 20mph limit resulted in a very small average speed reduction of between 3 and 4 mph, with over 50% of traffic exceeding the 20mph limit. Thames Valley Police issued this statement on 20th July: *"With regards to the introduction of 20mph limits across the county... Thames Valley Police fully support the Department for Transport guidance, which as you will be aware, clearly states that such limits should be self-enforcing as there is clear evidence to show that sign only schemes do not result in effective speed reductions."*

COST OF GENDER-NEUTRAL TOILETS

Subsequent to the Cabinet decision to further investigate the provision of gender-neutral toilets in all council buildings, OCC's Property Director confirmed that OCC has 905 sites and that each of these would have to be assessed. Ignoring the cost of any actual work required, just this assessment could cost in excess of £90,000 if each individual assessment cost £100. If the actual work costs £1000 per site on average, then the total cost would be in the region of £1m.

HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE DRAFT CENTRAL OXFORDSHIRE TRAVEL PLAN

OCC has launched a consultation on its draft Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan, which focuses on potential ways of taxing motorists to reduce car use in and around the city of Oxford. Residents and parish councils can respond to the survey on Let's Talk Oxfordshire:

<https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/central-oxfordshire-travel-plan>

Meanwhile, opponents of the hugely divisive Low Traffic Neighbourhood scheme in Oxford have launched a legal bid to overturn the council's decision.

SPECIFIC OCC REPORT FOR EYE & DUNSDEN

SONNING QUARRY LIAISON MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for 3.00pm Thursday 6th October at Dunsden Farm office.

FINGER POST TO INDICATE FOOTPATH LINK ON THE PLAYHATCH TO SONNING ROAD

This matter has progressed and a proposal has been put to the PC. Please advise if I can be of further help with this matter.

SONNING BRIDGE CLOSURE 19/9/22 to 23/9/22

I received multiple complaints about the way Wokingham BC communicated the road closure to residents and businesses.

GENERAL SODC REPORT

STAFFING ALLOCATION

As previously advised, I have queried why six new FTE officers are being appointed into esoteric roles in the core climate action team, while there appears to be staff shortages in critical areas such as Planning, and Planning Enforcement.

SODC HQ MOVE

SODC will shortly be moving out of Milton Park and into temporary accommodation owned by VOWH DC in Abingdon.

Given the vast surplus of council-owned property in Oxfordshire, Conservatives are pressing that this move should be made permanent and the vanity project of building a brand-new HQ in Didcot should be abandoned.

SPECIFIC SODC REPORT FOR EYE & DUNSDEN

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

The latest application should have been determined on 11th August but no decision notice has yet been issued. It would appear that applicant faces multiple challenges which have not been overcome. A pertinent comment from Countryside Officer (South and Vale) is:

From an ecological point of view, use of areas of the site for music events, night-time events and firework shows are all material to the assessment of the application, despite being omitted from the planning documents. Indeed, these elements of the onsite activities are those that are likely having the greatest adverse ecological impact. These activities must be fully assessed as part of the planning submission.

Yet the activities continue and no enforcement action is being taken. It is anticipated the application will now be determined during October.

SODC ward councillor's report Eye & Dunsden – 27th September 2022

Death of the Queen

Sadly on Thursday 8th September Queen Elizabeth II died - after reigning for over 70 years. This is the longest reign in our own history and second only to Louis XIV of France globally. She earned great respect for a lifetime of service and the manner in which she fulfilled her role. She was succeeded by Charles III. A period of mourning was respected causing numerous public council meetings to be deferred – hence the change in the date of this council meeting. Council work (as opposed to public and formal decision-making meetings) continued except for the Bank Holiday declared for the state funeral on the 19th September. District council facilities with the exception of car parks, toilets and emergency response remained closed on that day. Proposals to recognise and memorialise the Queen will be considered – including planting towards the “Green Canopy” campaign of her Platinum Jubilee.

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 22nd September, reported cases in SODC were at to a weekly rate per 100k of population of 84 (it peaked at 1,504 on 6th Jan) – a VERY low level – as we would hope to see in late summer - although it may be that reporting is 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. Booster jabs for both Flu and Covid for over 50s and the vulnerable are being rolled out through autumn, before any winter peak.

Ukraine

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

Planning – Housing Land Supply

SODC has published its Housing Land Supply statement for this year – declaring a supply of 5.58 years :- <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/local-plan-and-planning-policies/our-development-plan/five-year-land-supply/> SODC's statement process has been updated to adopt a “best practice” methodology which is rather more detailed than before – following expert advice.

Councils Withdraw from Ox-Cam Arc Project

SODC and Vale of White Horse leaders have agreed that they do not support proposals for a panregional development and growth partnership across the Oxford-Cambridge Arc – with its associated costs. Page 2 of 4 Cllr David Rouane, leader of SODC, wrote to Cllr Barry Wood confirming that South Oxfordshire will not be involved in the continuation of the Arc, a scheme that at one stage mooted a million new houses and an Expressway between the two cities. Indeed one could argue that the high-growth plans previously mooted for the Arc were starkly contrary to the Government's plans for regional “Levelling Up”. Cllr Rouane suggests focusing scarce funds on supporting residents through the cost of living crisis. You can read Cllr Rouane's letter here: [Address \(southoxon.gov.uk\)](https://www.southoxon.gov.uk)

Oxfordshire 2050 The Oxfordshire Plan 2050, a County-wide plan for growth and development, has collapsed after the Districts and City failed to reach agreement on housing numbers. Three “growth” scenarios were proposed by independent consultants: the Standard Method, “business as usual” which reflected current high rates of housing growth and a “transformational” scenario. The “transformation scenario would have represented an extra 51,000 new dwellings across Oxfordshire by comparison with the Standard Method approach - with perhaps 25% of that falling on South Oxfordshire. Oxford City (Labour) was seeking housing numbers in excess of those projected under the “transformational” scenario and was supported as regards higher local growth aims by the only remaining Conservative district – being Cherwell DC. In contrast SODC and Vale of White Horse DC wanted to see growth in line with the Standard Method for calculating housing need – with a focus on absorbing and providing for the very high levels of housing growth that have already been committed in existing local plans. Some £2.5m of government money was spent on the 2050 Plan but these funds were

earmarked specifically for Oxfordshire 2050 - so could not have been spent elsewhere. However the funds spent were in large part spent on research that was in any event necessary for all Local Plans and thus continues to have value. Much of the work previously done under Oxfordshire 2050 will now simply be absorbed by local authorities in the drafting of their own Local Plans (including South & Vale's Joint Local Plan). The key County-wide groups including: the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Climate Group, the Affordable Housing Group, the Infrastructure Group and the Local Nature Partnership will continue to operate.

Cost of Living Crisis – Clinic

SODC and BBC Radio Oxford co-hosted a Cost of Living Clinic in Didcot over the August Bank Holiday weekend. Oxfordshire Mind, Citizens Advice, Didcot Food Bank, officers and councillors from South Oxfordshire District Council and other organisations were on hand to provide residents with advice and support. A clinic in Abingdon will follow later this month (19 September) and it's hoped that clinics will be rolled out elsewhere in the District later this year. The clinic follows the Council's recognition a Cost of Living Emergency at Full Council in July. The new Prime Minister's plans to deal with what is likely to be a terrible winter for many of our residents and local businesses have been announced and full details are awaited. The Council is calling for urgent action from government including: a review of the energy cap regime to ensure that it provides much greater protection to consumers; an immediate reduction to VAT; an increase in benefits in line with inflation; reinstating the Universal Credit Uplift, providing immediate support for public transport; and increase funding to local authorities which are facing inflationary pressures. I attach a help leaflet. As ever, please direct residents to our Community Hub where officers can guide residents to the support that's available: 01235 422 600, email communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk or go to <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/cost-of-living-crisis-advice-and-support/> communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk

Cost of Living Crisis - Household Support Fund Regrettably, our portion of the Household Support Fund has been spent and is now open only to pensioners. Government guidance requires us to put aside a third of the funds for pensioners so with the main tranche now all accounted for, only pensioners are eligible for the remainder. Any pensioners struggling to pay their household bills are encouraged to get in touch with the Community Support team who can guide them through the application process. Applications close on 30 September.

Cost of Living Crisis - Rough Sleeping and Housing Support There is evidence of growing numbers of people rough sleeping in the District and these numbers are likely to increase further. SODC's Housing Team are expert at supporting people who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness and SODC follows the Housing First approach: whereby people in need are first provided with a roof over their heads and then additional support follows: Link: [About Housing First | Housing First England \(homeless.org.uk\)](#) Please contact: housing@southandvale.gov.uk or call 01235 422 452 to let us know if you would like to discuss a housing issue or have concerns about a resident who is homeless - or about to be.

Everyone Active Grant

Applications are still open for the new Everyone Active Grant. Individuals and organisations working on projects that help residents get active or maintain activity could get up to £1000 in funding. Eligible organisations are not limited to traditional sports clubs: gardening clubs, green gyms, walking groups etc could all be eligible. Do spread the word and if you are unsure whether your group is eligible, just ask! The Grants team has created a promotional poster you can download: Everyone Active Grant Scheme (Poster) (southandvale.gov.uk) The maximum claim is £1,000 (from a district fund of £50k). The deadline for applications is 30 September. More information available at: Grants - South Oxfordshire District Council (southoxon.gov.uk)

New offices From early October the (small temporary) offices of SODC (and VoWH DC) will be at Abbey House in Abingdon.

Protecting our Rivers: Bathing Water for Wallingford Volunteers have been conducting water quality testing at eight sites along the River Thames from Abingdon Bridge to Nosworthy Way in Wallingford, as part of the partnership project led by Thames21 and funded by South Oxfordshire District Council. The test results will form part of an evidence base to support an application for Bathing Water Status at Wallingford Beach, a well-known swimming area that has been enjoyed by local residents and visitors for generations. Should the application for Bathing Water Status be successful, the Environment Agency would be required to test the water in and around the bathing area for faecal bacteria and to make the results of these tests public. Bathing Water designation also requires the sewage undertaker (Thames Water) to treat effluent to "human health" standards thus giving greater powers to bring about improvements to treatment works that impact the bathing area. Cllr Jo Robb has been working with Thames 21 to roll out bathing areas in other locations along our stretch of the Thames, including at Pangbourne Meadows.

Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

As part of our efforts to ensure our services and support are accessible to all, SODC are conducting a Diversity and Inclusion Survey. Residents are asked for their views on how SODC can make it easier for people with different needs to access our services. SODC already do what is required of us legally, but is seeking to go further to help ensure everyone is able to find out information they need in the best possible way. The survey is open on our website and will run until 11.59pm on 19 September. Posters, Easy Read leaflets, paper copies of the strategy and survey will be available in local libraries from 15 August. (Alternative formats and languages are available by contacting or calling 01235 422 425.)

Broadband Rollout

Residents may have noticed that Gigaclear are rolling out high-speed broadband. Gigaclear have already installed broadband locally in places including Kidmore End, Sonning Common and, in Woodcote. Also active are Airband who seem to focus more on rural areas and use of poles where Open Reach ducts are lacking. The County Council maintains close working relationships with commercial operators and is taking a partnership approach to the rollout of commercial

broadband. Some residents have expressed concerns around the erection of unsightly poles for super-fast broadband. In 90% of delivery, existing Openreach ducts are used by all telecoms operators for blowing fibre through. However, there are areas where the legacy Openreach (Post Office) network was built by simply burying telephone lines. This is mostly in rural areas, but also in some suburban locations. The cost difference between arranging road closures, digging in new ducts then blowing fibre through them is in the order of four times the cost of standing poles and “flying fibre”. Ofcom has granted statutory Code Powers to Operators to stand new poles without planning consent - so the default will always be overhead delivery, typically on a highway verge where there is no requirement even for a wayleave. If an Operator wants/needs to use private land, they must request permission from the landowner. However ultimately if that permission is ‘unreasonably withheld’ (i.e. the landowner just doesn’t want the pole), then the Operator can use statutory Code Powers to trump the landowner anyway.

Gigaclear can be contacted if you have any queries: Email: networkbuildqueries@gigaclear.com Phone: 0370 774 0537

Airband can be contacted as follows: Email: hello@airband.co.uk Phone: 01905 676121

AONB extension

Progress on the local parishes alliance project to make a bid for extension of the AONB to Natural England has continued. It is now necessary to confirm parish support and preparedness to fund the work. The next formal meeting is scheduled for 25th October.

Leigh Rawlins

District Councillor