

EYE & DUNSDEN PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of a Meeting held on October 25th 2022 at 7.45pm at Dunsden Village Hall

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

129/22 Apologies for absence Richard Berkley, Naomi Baylis

130/22 Declarations of interest No new declarations

131/22 Minutes of the last meetings The Chairman proposed that the minutes of September 27th 2022 were accepted as a true record. This was seconded by Ian Pringle.

132/22 Matters arising from the minutes

048.05/22 Noticeboard at Playhatch. Item deferred.

089.03/22 Playhatch permissive path. The possibility of a permissive path between Playhatch and the Flowing Spring is to be considered. Item deferred.

089.07/22 A finger post will be attached to the sign on the verge to indicate the safe route to the river.

133/22 County Councillor's report Cllr Bartholomew summarised his local reports. The full report will be attached to the minutes.

134/22 District Councillor's Report Cllr Rawlins summarised his report which is attached to these minutes.

Both Councillors discussed the Caversham Lakes application now refused and enforcement prepared. The Clerk was asked to write to Tarmac to ask whether Cosmonaut Leisure is in breach of its lease conditions. **(Clerk to action)**

135/22 Public Question Time/Correspondence

135.01/22 Residents request a 20mph limit in Sonning Eye, and possibly also in Playhatch where there is no pavement. This was discussed and it will be on the agenda for the next meeting when all Councillors are present. **(Clerk to action)**

135.02/22 A resident remains concerned about the failure of Eye Marsh Drain to carry the water from Folly Lake into Berry Brook. The drain is blocked. This is a significant flooding issue. The Clerk was asked to write to the Environment Agency regarding the problem. **(Clerk to action)**

135.03/22 A resident had previously contacted the Parish Council regarding the height of the nettles and thistles on the verges in Sandpit Lane particularly on a tight bend causing major visibility issues. This has also been reported on Fix My Street but has been given the status of no further action. The Parish Council will request again that the verges are cut as visibility on a bend is a danger to all. **(Clerk to action)**

136/22 Financial Position

136.01/22 The present financial situation had been previously circulated.

136.02/22 The October accounts were presented. Invoices to the value of £875.24 were authorised for payment. These payments were proposed by Ian Pringle and seconded by David Woodward. All agreed. **(Clerk to action)**

137/22 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 No response made.

P22/S3478/FUL Extension to existing building to create rehearsal room facility. The Mill at Sonning (Theatre) Sonning Eye RG4 6TY. This was recommended for approval.

P22/S3639/HH Erection of single storey annex to front of property, removal of existing outhouse/s at front of property. The Granary Foxhill Lane Playhatch RG4 9QA. This was recommended for approval.

Applications Refused:

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

Applications Granted: None

Planning Issues: Poplar felling has taken place and new moorings created with a new access road and car parking in the Sonning Eye Conservation Area expected. The clerk was asked to enquire of Simon Kitson of SODC whether change of use consent or other planning permission is required **(Clerk to action)**

138/22 Eye & Dunsden Village Hall A sign has been designed by David Woodward to indicate that the new sweet chestnut trees were planted in memory of Her late Majesty the Queen. Forest School is now using the grounds. Bonfire Night is this weekend.

139/22 Neighbourhood Development Plan This continues and is making good progress.

140/22 Community Orchard Two working parties have taken place in October. The grass will be cut twice a year from now onwards.

141/22 Highways, Footpaths & Open Spaces

141.01 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. It was decided that a sign re parking on Dunsden Green will not be replaced. The old sign will be removed. **(Clerk to action)**

141.02 The Chairman suggested pedestrian crossing warning signs between the Flowing Spring and the footpath entrance could be purchased. **(Clerk to action)**

141.03 The broken pane in the Playhatch telephone kiosk at and the need for repainting has been reported.

142/22 Allotments The allotments are all let. Reminders to be sent to those whose rents remain unpaid. **(Clerk to action)**

143/22 Website Deferred as Naomi Baylis not able to attend the meeting.

144/22 Minerals/Playhatch & Sonning pit Liaison Groups. Nothing to report.

145/22 Matters for future consideration 20mph signage; creation of conservation areas.

Next meeting: Tuesday November 15th

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

GENERAL OCC REPORT

OCC SPENDS £30,000 ON 'SPACE INVADER'

This strange structure appeared in the car park in front of County Hall during August, taking up two valuable car parking spaces intended for visitors on county business. Apparently, it is a 'living wall' and the aim is to understand the impact of plants on air quality in the vicinity. It will stay in place for six months. The cost of the project to Council Tax payers is £30,000.



SECONDARY SCHOOL APPLICATION PROCESS OPENS IN OXFORDSHIRE

Parents and guardians can now apply for their Year 6 child to attend a secondary school for September 2023.

Applications should be submitted online at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/secondaryadmissions

OCC is encouraging parents and guardians to list four preferences on their application. This doesn't make it less likely that their first preference will be offered. But it does reduce the risk of all preferences being unsuccessful and children being allocated a place at a school that is not named on their list. The deadline for completed applications is 31 October 2022. Parents and guardians will then be contacted with the result to their application on national offer day, 1 March 2023. It is important to apply on time. Late applications will be processed later in the year and are far less likely to secure places at preferred schools.

TRAFFIC FILTER PLAN TO SPLIT OXFORD INTO FOUR SECTORS

Further measures to restrict car use in Oxford are out for consultation. 'Traffic filters' are to be introduced with the intention of creating four 'Sectors' within the city: North, South, West and East. When the traffic filters are operating, for cars without a permit, movement within each sector is unrestricted, but direct movement between sectors is not possible and requires use of the ring road. For example:

- County Hall, Westgate and Oxford station (all in West) will only be accessible via Botley Road, so if you were coming from North, East or South you would need to go via the A34 ring road and then Botley Road
- The area around St Giles & Gloucester Green will only be accessible via Banbury or Woodstock Road

Affected motorists will face much longer journey times and distances. The intention is to force a change in behaviour.

The original project description of 'sectorisation' has been dropped as it is felt that 'traffic filters' is a far less controversial term. Leading traders' organisation Oxford Business Action Group has slammed the proposals saying in the Oxford Mail: "We are concerned that in their current design, the introduction of these six traffic filters will negatively impact many businesses, causing closure for many and catastrophically damaging countless others."

A423 KENNINGTON BRIDGE REPAIRS

The project will see the replacement of the existing Kennington rail bridge structure, allowing for a new eastbound bus lane and a shared use path on the north side for cycling and walking. It will also enable flood alleviation for the area as part of the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme (OFAS), to be delivered by the Environment Agency. Construction is expected to take place between late 2023 and 2026, with the bridge never being fully closed to traffic but being replaced one half at a time. Conservatives are asking about the combined impact of these proposed repairs and the traffic filter restrictions.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST OCC UP BY 60%

OCC was the subject of dozens of complaints and enquiries to the ombudsman about its actions last year, new figures show. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman is responsible for investigating wrongdoing in local public services. If it finds that the council has acted in an unfair or unjust way, the ombudsman will offer recommendations on how to make things right. According to figures from the body, there were 64 complaints or enquiries made about OCC in the year to March – up from 40 the year before, a 60% increase since the new administration took over.

SEPTEMBER FULL COUNCIL MEETING DEFERRED UNTIL 7 OCTOBER

Due to the period of mourning, the September meeting of Full Council was deferred until 7 October with no change to the business to be considered.

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 coming back to Full Council at the October meeting. 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. 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. 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 October, 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." Cllr David Bartholomew, who is seconding the motion, 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."

SPECIFIC OCC REPORT FOR EYE & DUNSDEN

SONNING QUARRY LIAISON MEETING

The meeting was held on Thursday 6th October at Dunsden Farm office. No serious issues of concern were reported. The next meeting will be on 13th April at 3.00pm.

FURTHER SPEED SURVEY ON A4155

This matter has progressed and Technical Officer is making the necessary arrangements.

GENERAL SODC REPORT

SODC HQ MOVE

SODC has now moved out of Milton Park into temporary accommodation owned by VOWH DC in Abingdon. 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

P22/S1691/FUL CHANGE OF USE OF LAKE

The application has been refused on multiple grounds:

1. The full extent of the ecological impacts arising from the land clearance and other works associated with the implementation of the unauthorised change of use have not been adequately assessed within the supporting ecological appraisal and the document does not adequately establish the baseline for the assessment. The District Council considers that the unauthorised development and all associated activities have resulted in a net loss for biodiversity and the harm identified by the Council would not be outweighed by public benefits.
2. Insufficient information has been submitted with the planning application to enable the highways, traffic and transportation implications of the proposed development to be fully assessed. The proposal does not demonstrate that the traffic likely to be generated by the proposed use and its ancillary activities can be safely accommodated by the existing road network, without adverse impacts upon highway safety.
3. The proposed development would increase the number of vehicular movements along the site access road, which does not contain adequate provision for pedestrians. As significant parts of the proposed improvement works are on land outside the applicant's control, and there is no guarantee that consent for these would be forthcoming, The matter has now been referred to Enforcement, and officers have made arrangements with the owner to attend the site with a view to measuring, cataloguing and mapping the full extent of the breach of planning control. They have already started to prepare a report considering the need for enforcement action and do not intend to wait to see whether the owner chooses to appeal the application before progressing the enforcement investigation. They aim to finalise the report for submission to senior officers by the end of November.

SODC ward councillor's report Eye & Dunsden – 25th October 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 October, reported cases in SODC were at a weekly rate per 100k of population of 125 (it peaked at 1,504 on 6th Jan) – a low level – but now rising – albeit that reporting may be 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. In Australia and New Zealand winter flu was more impactful and more virulent than normal and this may well transmit into the UK's winter season. Booster jabs for both Flu and Covid for over 50s and the vulnerable are being rolled out through autumn, before any winter peak.

Hackney Carriage tariffs SODC are implementing set hackney carriage tariffs for the first time. The vast majority of other councils do set tariffs. The rates in South Oxfordshire are being set at the 16th highest at a level compatible with Oxford, Wokingham and Reading. These tariffs offer cabbies a fair reward and give passengers a reliable and consistent approach to charging.

Henley Conservation Area A new conservation area for Henley is being progressed through due process and will in due course influence planning decisions within the designated area.

Investment Zones Hoping to achieve a dash for economic growth, the Government are considering designating some investment zones wherein there would be deregulation and low/no tax incentives. Within these planning controls would be minimised and planning designations such as Green Belt, AONB, SSSIs and habitats etc protections dispensed with. The suggestion is that these might incentivise companies to invest and grow – without Government investment – although there is past evidence that in significant measure they simply cause hopping from outside the zone to within it and without great growth in new jobs. To the extent that planning is abandoned in these zones there would be little local control nor application of commonly expected standards. Personally I would see risks that rather echo the slackening of building control before Grenfell. South Oxfordshire already has very high growth in our Local Plan to 2035; we do not need extra! At its council on 13th October SODC agreed a motion noting concerns with these zones, loss of environmental standards – particularly on Greenfield areas and clearly stating that SODC already has a very high level of growth in its Local Plan 2035, needs no extra and would not want one. OCC has written in similar terms to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and communities explaining why no expression of interest is being made for Oxfordshire and noting that it would conflict with the agreed Vision and principles of development in the county.

Crossways (Harpsden on Shiplake border) appeal

Annoyingly the appeal Inspector for the Crossways site refused to apply the widely understood logic of settlement limits and also refused to accept SODC's annual statement of Housing Land Supply – simply because, requiring responses from sites developers across the district, it had not been available at the hearing – even though it was provided in good time for his determination of the case. Instead he asked the applicants if they would be content for him to accept this evidence. For their part they argued to exclude such evidence; surprise! SODC had applied a detailed methodology to the HLS statement – following “best practice” as counselled by the LGAs Planning Advisory Service that works closely with central government to help councils comply. Under the government's HLS rules Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have to prove their supply – by reference to support evidence from.... Developers. (Particularly trying to deal with the bizarre findings of the appeal inspector for Inspired Villages.) Yet here, when that process is followed as swiftly as responses could be obtained from developers, the appeal inspector decides ad hoc to ignore it. The current set of ministers are said to be considering the future of the HLS rules and targets. Moreover the new PM denounced the Planning inspectorate for too frequently not upholding the decisions of LPAs! It is certainly evident that the current system is chaotic and not fit for purpose.

Woodcote – NP renewal The Woodcote NP went to referendum on 29th Sept and gained a 92.4% Yes vote on a 34.5% turnout. It took them 6 years of hard work for that revision. The NP was made by SODC at its council meeting on 13th October. Woodcote was the “trailblazer” larger village – along with Thame town at the start of NPs in South Oxfordshire. They provided a lot of help to Sonning Common during our first NP. Congratulation to Dr Geoff Botting and the team there. SODC IT and processes “transformation” One of the baleful fruits of past decision to outsource SODC services in an ineffectual way has been a lack of IT development and progression to more up-to-date and efficient systems. A major programme of analysis and migration is now being planned. Analysis has taken place of all activities and processes in the council with a view to providing a better and more efficient service. This analysis has identified many opportunities for improvements and scope to migrate to better software and hardware-provision solutions that will be better and also offer flexibility and resilience.

Performance reporting – Corporate Plan and Climate action Plan Quarter One reports are being published against the criteria for SODC's action plans. Generally progress is good.

SODC Constitution SODC adopted a new constitution at its council on 13th October. The new constitution was broadly updated by Patrick Arran the officer who is the new head of Legal & Democratic, in conjunction with a working committee of councillors.

Community Governance SODC's Community Governance committee met on 10th September. It confirmed some boundary changes arising from housing development; but nothing locally in this ward.

Motion re Didcot boundary and Great Western Park Most of Didcot sits within South Oxfordshire, however a significant part of Great Western Park sits in Harwell parish in the Vale of White Horse District Council. At its council on 13th October SODC agreed a motion that officers should write a report on the options to address matters and potentially to ask the Boundary Commission to consider a change to the border between SODC and VoWHDC. Where a settlement expands it is normal to consider arrangements where it all sits within one set of councils.

AONB extension At time of writing the next formal meeting is scheduled for 25th October – just before the E&D council meeting.

Councillor Grants Please start thinking ahead for councillor grants. They will close around the end of January 2023, but ideally you should be ready before.

Caversham Lakes – “Watersports” planning application SODC planning refused this application (ref P22/S1691/FUL) with a broad range of reasons, taking into account all consultation responses – including highways input from Reading Borough Council. The applicants seem to be indicating that they will elect to appeal the refusal.

Leigh Rawlins
District Councillor

