

EYE & DUNSDEN PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of a Meeting held on January 17th 2023 at 7.45pm at Duns den Village Hall

Present: Cllrs David Woodward, Ian Pringle, Richard Berkley, David Bartholomew (OCC + SODC) and Leigh Rawlins (SODC). One resident.

001/23 Apologies for absence Naomi Baylis, Clive Leeke.

002/23 Declarations of interest No new declarations.

003/23 Minutes of the last meetings Richard Berkley proposed that the minutes of November 15th 2022 were accepted as a true record. This was seconded by Ian Pringle.

004/23 Matters arising from the minutes

048.05/22 The Vice Chairman will forward the receipt for the materials when the noticeboard repairs are complete. **(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 chased. **(Vice Chairman to action)**

089.07/22 The new sign on the pedestrian gate to show Pedestrian Route to the River is in situ.

124.04/22 The Clerk reported that an acknowledgement of the request for pedestrian signage near the Flowing Spring and the steps to the footpath entrance could be purchased.

150/22 Speed survey. This took place in November. The Vice Chairman remarked on the problems of interpreting the data and the averaging technique used which minimised the highest speeds on a busy road. Cllr Bartholomew suggested that the PC should go back to OCC with relevant questions to aid the interpretation and perhaps see a way forward.

005/23 County Councillor's report Cllr Bartholomew summarised his local reports. The full report will be attached to the minutes.

The Chairman asked about Arriva's decision to reduce the bus service via Binfield Heath and Dunsden. David Bartholomew confirmed that there is little that can be done as it is a private company. However, it was suggested that maybe there could be a discussion with Loddon Brewery as Dunsden Brewery is very popular and use of public transport should be encouraged. A Tarmac Scoping Opinion Request was discussed. Initial points to note are the doubling of the size of the area, the position so close to the Thames and the proximity to Sonning Eye in terms of noise, dust and light impacts. The Clerk was asked to notify those who had not been listed as consultees. **(Clerk to action)** Cosmonaut Leisure was discussed, a copy of the draft enforcement paperwork has been sent to the solicitors.

006/23 District Councillor's Report Cllr Rawlins summarised his report which is attached to these minutes. The extension to the AONB was briefly discussed. All seven local Parish Councils in the Joint Parishes' AONB Group have commissioned a landscape value assessment to support the application for the extension. Because of unexpected costs an increase of 40% in the previously agreed costs was agreed. (See 008.03/23) The continuation of unauthorised commercial activity on the banks of the Thames at Sonning Eye was discussed. The reply from SODC with regard to the work was very disappointing. The Clerk was asked to write to SODC Planning again and ask for a site visit with the Chairman. **(Clerk to action)**

007/23 Public Question Time/Correspondence Mr Nick Marks agreed with the PC regarding its response to the Scoping Opinion and added the impact on flooding in the area which could be alleviated by lagoons rather than backfilling.

008/23 Financial Position

008.01/23 The present financial situation had been previously circulated.

008.02/23 The December 2022 and January 2023 accounts were presented. Invoices to the value of £1583.81 and £1401.14 were authorised for payment. These payments were proposed by Ian Pringle and seconded by Richard Berkley. All agreed. **(Clerk to action)**

008.03/23 The extra £400 contribution for JPAG to submit the report to Natural England as part of the consultation to extend the AONB was agreed.

009/23 Planning Matters

OCC ref: MW.0003/23 Scoping Opinion request in support of a planning application for a southern and eastern extension to Sonning Quarry, using existing consented ancillary facilities including site access points onto Playhatch Road, the A4155, together with retention and operation of plant site situated south of Playhatch Road along with retention and use of field conveyor including bridges over Playhatch Road and Spring Lane, with restoration using indigenous and import materials to agricultural land and nature conservation habitat at Sonning Quarry, Playhatch Road, Sonning Eye, Reading, RG4 6TX A response is to be drafted and sent to the Chairman. **(Clerk to action)**

New Applications: None

Applications Granted

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

P22/S1004/HH Two storey rear extension and roof alterations. 2 Waterside Sonning Eye RG4 6TT

Certificate of Lawful Development

P22/S4231/LDP Extend rear of existing bungalow and change of use to 6 persons HMO. Lydden Sonning Eye RG4 6TN

010/23 Eye & Dunsden Village Hall The next event takes place on Saturday 21st January. It is well supported but very few tickets have been purchased locally.

011/23 Neighbourhood Development Plan Amendments to the first draft of the Neighbourhood Development Plan is in hand.

012/23 Community Orchard The work by Heights Treecare will be confirmed for next week.
(Clerk to action)

013/23 Highways, Footpaths & Open Spaces

013.01 A reworded sign is to be placed on the Furleigh Bank Car Park to indicate that there is to be no overnight parking and that penalties apply. **(Chairman to action)**

013.02 The 20mph designation was discussed. Areas to be requested for consideration are the road from Sonning Bridge as far as the mini-roundabout and Playhatch from the roundabout on the A4155 up through Playhatch as far as Newbury Cottage. All agreed.

013.03 Storm Water Drains in Playhatch: These are blocked again. This was reported on Fix My Street.

013.04 Potential TPO's: Item deferred.

014/23 Allotments The allotments are all tenanted and rents paid.

015/23 Website The Chairman has someone who may help to update the PC website.
(Chairman to action)

016/23 Minerals/Playhatch & Sonning pit Liaison Groups. A meeting is arranged at the Crown at 10.30am on Tuesday 24th January.

017/23 Matters for future consideration Potential TPO's

Next meeting: Tuesday February 21st 2023 at The Flowing Spring

REPORT TO EYE & DUNSDEN PARISH COUNCIL JANUARY 2023 FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

GENERAL OCC REPORT

CLIMATE LOCKDOWN

Conspiracy theorists have cunningly linked OCC plans to create '15-minute neighbourhoods' with the plans to introduce six traffic filters that will divide the city of Oxford.

- An example is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkZDcVFIxRI>
- And the OCC rebuttal is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8Dn8MWpv-U>
- Regrettably, the fake messaging has frequently been believed and has resulted in threats to councillors and staff: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-64001776>

THE TRUTH: NO LOCKDOWN BUT FILTERS TO SPLIT OXFORD INTO FOUR SECTORS

The truth behind the 'Climate Lockdown' scare is that OCC plans to spend £6.5m on traffic filters that will split Oxford into four sectors: 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. Affected motorists will face much longer journey times and distances. The intention is to force a change in behaviour. At the Cabinet meeting on 29th November 2022, a record number of individuals and organisations spoke passionately for and against the highly controversial proposal. The meeting was attended by police armed with tasers and security guards. The chamber had to be cleared at one point. The proposal was approved by Cabinet. The Conservative Opposition has grave concerns about the proposal but condemns the misinformation that is being spread and the resultant abuse suffered by councillors and employees. Many supporters of these measures now concede that they have been poorly planned, maximising the damaging effects of Low-Traffic Neighbourhoods, bus gates and Botley Road improvements works to motorists and businesses in Oxford.

COUNCIL BUDGET FOR 23/24

The Budget process is nearing conclusion, and it is likely the administration will impose a 5% increase in Council Tax on residents. In terms of proposed Directorate spend, a staggering 71% will go on Social Care (Adults £221.3m, Children's £164.9m, total Directorate £544m). As a proportion of gross expenditure (excluding schools) it will be around 52% of c£750m. By way of comparison Highways & Transport will get just 8%.

CHILDREN SERVICES CURRENTLY £14.5M OVER BUDGET OF £149.1M

The Children's Services budget for 22/23 is £149.1M. As of October 2022, the latest forecast actual spend is £163.M – an overspend of £14.5M. While there is no question that vulnerable children must be protected, the individual costs are staggering. A typical mainstream residential placement is £5,100 per child per week. Costs for children who need significant support can be as high as £20,000 per child per week – pro-rata that is £1m per child per year. Conservatives are questioning whether best value is being achieved and what action is being taken to bring down these extraordinary costs. Despite such questions over value for money, the Council is consulting on a budget that would see Council Tax increase to pay for an 8.3% cash rise in Children's Services spending.

OCC APPOINTS NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE ON £225,000 PA



Dr Martin Reeves has been named as the new Chief Executive of OCC. Dr Reeves is expected to take over from Interim Chief Executive, Stephen Chandler, in the Spring. The move means the Council will have been without a permanent Chief Executive for over a year, following Mr Chandler's engagement as an Interim in February 2022, when the process of ending the partnership between OCC and Cherwell District Council began. Dr Reeves joins from Coventry City Council where he has been Chief Executive since 2009. From 2008 - 2009 he was Chief Executive of Bedfordshire County Council, after serving as Assistant Chief Executive there from 2006 - 2008. He will be paid a salary of £225,000 pa. Not only do Conservatives question whether Town Hall chiefs should be paid such salaries but they also continue to raise the issue of the lack of urgency surrounding the recruitment of a permanent Chief Executive.

CAR PARK 'LIVING WALL' THAT COST COUNCIL-TAX PAYERS £30,000 NOW REMOVED

The strange structure that 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, has now been removed. Apparently, it was a 'living wall' and the aim was to understand the impact of plants on air quality in the car park. The cost of this five-month project to Council Tax payers was £30,000.



OCC RESOLVES TO IMPROVE SERVICE FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

At the 13 December Full Council meeting, the council acknowledged the difficulties experienced by certain parents and students in the delivery of its SEND service and paid tribute to the testimonies of parents heard at Full Council on 1 November 2022. Councillor Eddie Reeves, Leader of the Opposition, said: *"This is an issue of national and indeed grave concern and Oxfordshire does not compare that favourably to other counties and certainly not to other comparable local authorities – we are letting parents, pupils and professionals down if we don't acknowledge that. We have over 5,000 children and young people with educational health plans in this county – that has grown of a quarter in the past three years. We must ensure that assessments are undertaken promptly and we must ensure that recommendations are subsequently acted upon promptly."*

SPECIFIC OCC REPORT FOR EYE & DUNSDEN

P23/S0042/CM: DEVELOPMENT WORK AT SONNING QUARRY

The council has received an application for an Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Opinion for a southern and eastern extension to Sonning Quarry. It would use existing consented ancillary facilities including site access points onto Playhatch Road and the A4155, together with retention and operation of plant site situated south of Playhatch Road. Details are available on both the OCC and SODC websites.

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

As previously reported, the application was refused on multiple grounds and had been referred to Enforcement. Officers now advise that a copy of the draft enforcement report together with two draft enforcement notices and other supporting documents have been sent to the council's solicitors for their consideration before enforcement action is authorised.

SODC ward councillor's report Eye & Dunsden – 17th January 2023

(I believe that this January report will adequately cover December and January.)

Covid-19

The reliability of data on Covid cases is now much reduced following the end of test and trace. However national figures have shown falls in cases – contrary to what might be expected for this time of year. At 7th January 2023, reported cases in SODC were at a weekly rate per 100k of population of 67 (it peaked at 1,504 on 6th January 2022) – a low level but one that has increased a bit. Evidence suggests that the post-holiday numbers have increased a little - albeit that reporting may be somewhat incomplete.

Separately, there has been significant levels of flu causing some references to a “twindemic” in terms of absences and pressures on the NHS. In Australia and New Zealand winter flu was more impactful and more virulent than normal and this may well echo into the UK's winter season. Booster jabs for both Flu and Covid for over 50s have been provided.

Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill

As debates on the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill settled down, the Secretary of State Michael Gove sent this letter to his MPs seeking to address areas of concern :

https://mcusercontent.com/3036c690a1180c4edb90ae1a0/files/6d2b9179-a5d5-2d7d07ab-dbodo264c3b4/22125_Michael_Gove_MP_to_all_Conservative_MPs.pdf

We shall need to see what actually transpires, but there are some positive signs that the concerns pressed by many of us about our corrupted and broken planning system are now beginning to attract an appetite for action – as we begin to look forward to elections!

The following indications were given :-

- Recognition that unrealistic top-down targets take power away from communities, and cause erosion of Local plans and fuel resented speculative development in unsustainable locations.
- Standard method formulas that place too much on the South East etc to be reconsidered and also to become merely a “guide”.
- More weight given to designated landscapes.
- The Planning Inspectorate to be reined-in and told not to pursue the old Jenrick agenda. Instead to give more respect to locations approved by local Plans.
- More respect as regards character for prevailing local densities. More local power to dictate minimum standards.
- An end to 5 year Housing Land supply obligations for authorities with up to date plans. Scope for the benchmark in the meantime to fall to 4 years for areas who are well on with making an up to date Local plan.
- Neighbourhood Plans will become more powerful against speculative development and have protection for 5

years rather than just for 2.

- Planning fees – set by the Ministry - will be increased to help with resourcing planning departments – with much higher fees for retrospective applications made by those who have been in breach of planning.
- More pressure on developers to build out sites and scope to take into account bad behaviour in future applications. More consideration of those who “game” the system.
- Annoyingly he seems intent on pressing forward with a new form of infrastructure levy, but is at least allowing Local Planning Authorities to separate Greenfield and Brownfield rates and to set rates and zones locally. (My fear being that s106 is often an important tool.)
- Scope to require local registration of housing for short-term lets – with more local control. A different use class may be considered.
- More emphasis on the internal regeneration of urban areas – particularly cities and large towns.

It is, I suggest, apparent that an approaching general election is, very belatedly, focussing minds! For how long? Nonetheless, the above considerations would surely be rational steps in the right direction.

There was also a ministerial statement to confirm the intended changes :- <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2022-12-06/hcws415>

Now a draft revised NPPF – with tracked changes - has been released for consultation:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-reforms-to-nationalplanning-policy>

Many of the above feature, but as yet there is no further detail on any new algorithm for the Standard Method of calculating Housing Need.

Councillor Grants Scheme The Councillor Grant Scheme will close at noon on the 20th January – see www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants.

AONB extension A brief for the work required has been developed and has been shared with suppliers. Costing and delivery schedules are being discussed. Indications are that the costs have increased and a new approval is needed by parishes. A first phase of delivery has been approved. The next meeting is pencilled in for 7th February 2023.

Happy New Year all!

Leigh Rawlins

District Councillor