

Minutes of the meeting of Sonning Common Parish Council held on Monday 20 January 2014 at 20.00 hrs in the Village Hall.

Before opening the meeting Mr Kedge paid this tribute to Robin Hunter who died on 4th January: "Robin was for many years an effective and popular member of the Parish Council and for many years he chaired the Finance Committee. Robin's drive and determination made a huge contribution to village life. He was the prime mover in the purchase of the Millennium Field and until recently he worked as a volunteer in the Police Office. He will be much missed."

Present: Mr Kedge (Chairman); Mrs Diwell; Mr Fort; Mr Greenwood; Mr Jones; Mrs Lewis; Mr Rawlins; Mr Reynolds and Mr Stoves. Mr D Robinson, Henley Standard.

County Councillor D Bartholomew and District Councillors P Harrison and A Rooke were present for part of the meeting. Mrs H Lewis attended for item 14/122 only.

- 14/114 Apologies for absence and declarations of interests: Apologies: Miss Hunt; Ms Noble; and Mrs Phillips-Tilbury. No declarations.
- 14/115 Public Question Time: Nothing raised.
- 14/116 Police Report, previously circulated. Mr Kedge thanked PCSO Boyes for his report and continued good work and reminded members of the invitation to visit the Police Museum next month.
- 14/117 Minutes of Finance Committee meeting held on 8 January 2014 were presented and ratified.
- 14/118 Minutes of previous meetings:
118.01 Planning Committee held on 16 December 2013 were presented and approved.
118.02 Parish Council meeting held on 16 December 2013 were presented and approved.
- 14/119 County Councillor's Report: Cllr Bartholomew advised that the OCC budget now has to find savings totalling £265m with the final budget is to be set on 18 February; preparations for snow and ice have been overtaken by flood mitigation; there is a consultation under way about care home fees. Locally, a grant has been made to the CE Horticultural Society and there is likely to be another to the Village Gardeners. The proposal for a disabled parking space in Ashford Avenue was supported by the meeting with a request for costings to turn the grassed corner into more formal parking spaces.
- 14/120 District Councillor's Report: Cllr Harrison advised that the subject of the third Reading bridge has resurfaced. It is opposed by both SODC and OCC with suggestions that it should be an extension of the A329M very strongly opposed- if it happens it should be routed from the west of Reading. Regarding the Boundary Review Cllr Harrison reported on the strong views expressed at the last meeting of RPPC and opined that he is in favour of there being no change as 'it would upset councillors living in that area'.
- 14/121 Parish Clerk's Report: The plan to work with SCVHMC on insulation of the hall was noted. Mr Kedge sought and was given assurance that data security is being progressed.
- 14/122 Dog mess: Mrs Lewis opened what became a strong discussion on this perennial problem. Mr Stoves expressed the view that the possibility of employing a warden should be explored despite the likely cost. It does appear that the worst offenders act in the hours of darkness. Mrs Helen Lewis was asked to speak and confirmed the scale of the problem as it affects those going to and from the primary school and the willingness of parents to assist if possible. Other options including more bins, more notices and coloured sprays were discussed. It was agreed that the Parish clerk should seek advice about what, if anything, works elsewhere and to decide whether to place a new bin at Ilex Close and to investigate what other action(s) can be taken.
- 14/123 Community Governance Review (Parish boundaries): It was resolved unanimously to approve Mr Stoves' proposal that the letter attached as Appendix 1 be sent to SODC. In particular there was strong support for the proposal to increase the number of councillors.
- 14/124 Neighbourhood Development Plan progress: Mr Greenwood advised that work is progressing especially on consultations with landowners.

- 14/125 Snow Team and Salting requests: Mr Jones asked the meeting to reiterate that there are neither the funds nor the resources to extend the area covered by the current snow plan. It was agreed that this should be so and that owners of hedges that obstruct movement of pavement gritters (and prams and wheelchairs) should be required to cut them back to their boundaries.
- 14/126 Margaret Allwright Way Hedge. The Parish Clerk advised that the hedges will now be cut to a lower level around 1.8 metres and back by about 0.3 – 0.5 metres. The results will be reviewed later in the year. It was accepted that initially the results may look unsightly.
- 14/127 Skatepark: Mrs Lewis advised that progress continues with funding matters.
- 14/128 Administration matters:
- 128.1 It was resolved to confirm Ros Varnes' appointment as Deputy Parish Clerk having successfully completed her probationary period.
- 128.2 It was resolved to support the proposal that in order to improve service to residents the Parish Office's formal opening hours should be extended to include 14.00 to 18.00 every Tuesday.
- 14/129 Matters for future consideration.

Next meeting: Monday 17 February 2014 at 20.00.

Chairman: Dated:

Appendix 1 Letter to SODC

SONNING COMMON PARISH COUNCIL

Mr D Buckle
Chief Executive
SODC
Wallingford OX10 8HQ

21 January 2014

Dear Mr Buckle

Community Governance Review

The following was approved at last night's meeting of this Parish Council.

We are responding to your three letters of 19 December 2013 and that of 14 January 2014.

On the three boundary matters our views are:

1. The recommended boundary with Kidmore End – we are content.
2. The southern boundary at the junction of Kennylands Road and Peppard Road. We are very disappointed with the suggestion that this will not be changed. All that is required is a very small excision from Eye & Dunsden to put the whole triangle into our parish. Given that the other two matters require a new boundary line to be drawn we cannot understand why this should be costly and ask that it be reconsidered.
3. The recommended boundary with Rotherfield Peppard. Our final submission took careful account of your criteria which, although not numbered, we assumed were in priority order. First in your list is: 'natural or man-made boundaries that help to define clearly one community from another'. On that basis our views are that:
 - a. Our proposed north-eastern boundary line was put forward because it follows both a hedge and a ridge line that combine to provide a clear natural boundary to this settlement. The working group proposal on that edge seems to focus primarily on a man-made boundary of minor roads that we find perplexing and we suggest that it be re-considered.
 - b. We readily accept the proposal following Gallowstree Road on the north-west as there is no obvious natural boundary there.

Regarding councillor numbers we are extremely disappointed by your view that our request for 15 is unreasonable. There are many reasons why we wish to have more members from May 2015 including, inter alia:

- A. Sonning Common is a key district centre as is indicated by the 8,400 patients registered at its Health Centre. Collectively the population of 'Greater Sonning Common' (including Rotherfield Peppard and Kidmore End) was 6,735 at the March 2011 Census. Sonning Common is unusual in having such populous other settlements so close to and dependent on it. We are actually servicing needs arising from well beyond our actual or putative boundary.
- B. The parish of Sonning common had 1,595 dwellings in March 2011 but as SODC Planning has determined we are actually a "larger village" settlement that has 1,916 dwellings (including 321 from Rotherfield Peppard) for the purposes of allocating new homes under the Core Strategy. The proposed boundary change will transfer many of

those dwellings and more electors to us adding to the work of the council, its committees and its working parties.

- C. The number of parish councillors has no bearing on any costs as they are all volunteers and in many cases retired. As we are currently inhibited from doing things we want to do because of a shortage of members then surely it should be up to SCPC to decide how many councillors it actually needs. The public are being denied the opportunity to participate in local democracy and get things done.
- D. We are faced with the likely retirement of some experienced and very hard working members in 2015. With more members we may be able to spread the workload more evenly to help new members to gain experience by gentle rather than total immersion. Also, with some more councillors we can get into and stay in top gear which will be even more necessary when the boundary changes take effect.

We therefore ask that the working group consider an increase in our number if 15 happens to be unacceptable to them. Please ask them to note that our present 12 were all elected in a contested election so there is strong local interest in serving the community.

Yours sincerely

Philip Collings
Parish Clerk