

Sonning Common Parish Council Meeting

Held in the Village Hall on
Monday 21st March 2011 at 8pm

Chairman Mr Rooke

Minutes

Present: Mr Rooke (Chairman), Mr Fort, Mr Greenwood, Mr Kedge, Mrs Lewis, Mrs Noble, Mrs Phillips-Tilbury, Mrs Poska, Mr Reynolds, Mr Stoves, 5 members of the public, 1 member of the press.

11/49 **Apologies for absence:** Mrs Diwell, Miss Hunt, Mrs Viney (OCC)

11/50 **Declarations of Interest:** None.

11/51 **Committee Membership**

50.01 Mr Kedge proposed that Mr Reynolds should join the Planning committee whilst he himself should remain as ex officio member

50.02 Mr Kedge proposed that Mr Stoves should join the Finance committee.
Both proposals agreed.

11/52 **Minutes of previous meetings:**

52.01 Planning held on 17th January 2011. (Deferred from the last meeting.)

52.02 Planning held on 7th March 2011.

52.03 Parish held on 21st February 2011.

52.04 Finance held on 2nd March 2011.

All of the above were approved unanimously.

11/53 **Matters arising from the minutes** - none

11/54 **County Councillor's report:** – none.

11/55 **District Councillor's report:** – Cllr P Harrison

55.01 South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) has the 18th lowest Council Tax out of 187 District Councils in England.

55.02 SODC has carried out significant cost cutting of over the past four years achieving saving of over £4 million.

55.03 The Core Strategy document has been submitted to the Secretary of State. A planning inspector will be appointed to hold hearings and then report before the end of the year. Regarding housing, the strategy aims for 60% of new housing in towns and 40% in villages, mostly larger ones such as Sonning Common. Results likely to be adopted in 2012. The inspector's focus will be on market towns first and then on rural areas.

55.04 Mr Greenwood asked if the housing allocation had been decided upon. Cllr Harrison stated that it was not random in towns and that there are as yet no decisions about actual developments.

55.05 Mr Greenwood asked if the inspector's focus will be specific or general. Cllr Harrison stated that the initial focus will be on market towns with the second phase on the rural areas.

11/56 **Lea Meadow revised application briefing by Stewart Lilly Associates:**

56.01 Mr Lilly stated that local reactions had been taken into on board and that they are negotiating with OCC/Highways regarding access issues which will now be focused on entry via the Herb Farm. He confirmed that there is no suggestion that the Herb Farm itself is to be developed. Otherwise he confirmed that he believes that all other statutory services are sufficient for the site. The revised proposals will include 40% of affordable housing which is supported by SOHA with local people having first priority. He asked if the PC could set up a local consultation group to engage the community in dialogue.

56.02 Mr Dijkstra explained that they are keen to be reviewing the plans with local input. He asked how they can get involved with the community for mutual benefit, especially financial. Regarding how to do this he suggested that a variety of consultation options are available. He pointed out that by having a single site affordable housing is made possible whereas scattered development will preclude this.

56.03 Mr Greenwood asked how many houses are now proposed versus the original

- suggestion of 105. Mr Lilly said that it would now be in the 80s.
- 56.04 Mr Greenwood asked if the change was due to access. Mr Lilly said that it is due to the protection of trees and an increased requirement by SODC for open space/leisure.
- 56.05 Mr Greenwood asked, and was supported by Mr Fort, for a new exhibition to be held. Mr Lilly said that he would be pleased to do that.
- 11/57 **Public Question Time:** Mrs Symons, for the Sonning Common Society, asked if there had been any progress with the notice board at Widmore Pond. Clerk to respond directly. No other questions.
- 11/58 **Village Hall and Car Park:**
- 58.01 Public Toilets. Mr Stoves reported that only three plumbers out of five approached had submitted quotations to the Parish Office. He recommended that from Messrs A B Walker priced at £9,022.66 and had received good references concerning their work. Questions were raised about control of access (time locks) and cleaning (Clerk to discuss with Mr Parisi). Mr Kedge proposed that the recommended quotation be accepted. All agreed.
- 58.02 Car Park Signage. The signage suggested by OCC to effect a one way flow through the car park was circulated and agreed. Clerk to obtain quotations cost sharing options.
- 58.03 Responsibilities of VHMC and PC regarding hall. Mr Rooke advised that progress is being made but there is more to do.
- 58.04 Upgrade of PA System. Mrs Phillips-Tilbury reported that the least cost option will be to upgrade the current system, installed by AVT, with four additional radio microphones. Even this is costed at over £1,400. Mr Kedge proposed that further quotes should be obtained which was agreed without dissent.
- 11/59 **Footpaths, Greens, Play Areas and Open Spaces:**
- 59.01 Grass tenders. Mrs Noble outlined quotes received and circulated previously. She proposed acceptance of that from Berinsfield Community Services at £3,064 for eight cuts. Mr Reynolds enquired how the work is to be audited. The Clerk pointed out that much of the work is recharged to householders who are quick to observe and report errors and omissions. He will also monitor. All agreed.
- 59.02 Play areas. Mr Rooke asked for views on the right frequency of inspections by nominated councillors. After brief discussion it was agreed that reports should be made fortnightly with all returned to the Clerk, including nil returns.
- 59.03 Allotments water charges dispute. Mrs Noble outlined ongoing problems with non-payment for water used by an allotment holder for her goats kept on an adjacent field not owned by the Parish Council. The person concerned has not responded to an offer to reduce her outstanding £120 debt to £60 and then keep her charges at £60 p.a. or have the supply disconnected. The deadline for her acceptance is 14th April. Clerk to remind her by Recorded Delivery and if no response to arrange disconnection.
- 11/60 **Consultation: Waste Management OCC:** Mr Kedge advised that there are no issues with this.
- 11/61 **Finance Committee**
- 61.01 Finance Software Proposal. Mr Stoves outlined the result of investigations into obtaining a new system specifically designed for local councils. The Clerk gave his analysis of his investigations which had concluded that only the Alpha system supplied by RBS Software Solutions of Swindon is the well suited to the Parish Council's needs and it had been enthusiastically recommended by all its existing users. The initial setup cost will be under £700 with an ongoing support cost of £99 per annum. The Clerk said that it can be installed on 30th March if approved and that he would be fully trained as part of that installation. All agreed.
- 61.02 February reconciliation. The anomaly of £18 had been found and the final version was then circulated to all.
- 61.03 Risk Assessment, Asset Register and Financial Risk Assessment. These documents required for the Internal Audit were circulated. Agreed.
- 11/62 **Website Replacement**
- 62.01 Mrs Noble introduced the conclusion of the sub-committee investigating options available that the Parish Council should commission a new website from mh-p who operate as parishcouncilwebsite.co.uk. Examples of other Council's websites had

been circulated and given positive feedback by councillors. The need for replacement is urgent given the withdrawal of support for the existing site. Features of the new site were outlined and it was confirmed that it would be fully maintained and operated by the supplier. Costs will be under £800 for the initial setup and some £950 per annum thereafter. All agreed and Mrs Noble was thanked for her effort.

- 11/63 **Quality Parish Council opportunity:** The Clerk gave a short summary of the Quality Parish Councils initiative and circulated a booklet describing how this status is achieved. It was agreed that all should read the booklet and revisit the subject at the next meeting.
- 11/64 **Internal Audit Update:** The Clerk reported that Mr P Hood had been appointed by his predecessor and would begin working after the year end. Noted.
- 11/65 **Elections:** Mr Rooke reminded all that these take place on 5th May and that forms are available in the Parish Office. Posters will go up on 25th March. Noted
- 11/66 **Blounts Court Road Car Boot Sale - congestion and disturbance issues:** The Clerk reported that the individual making a complaint had been unable to attend at the last moment. He has been advised to collect views from others affected and may be at the next meeting. Noted.
- 11/67 **Library:** Mr Kedge reported that it now seems that all libraries are being targeted with the same cuts. The sticking point is on 'one professional plus volunteers'. Consultation is now happening with OCC. Mrs Poska suggested that councillors and others should visit Goring to see how well they have done. Noted.
- 11/68 **Royal Wedding Parish Tea Party:** Mrs Phillip-Tilbury described how the event in the Village Hall on 29th April will be a celebration a celebration of community life in the village during the long Bank Holiday that happens to coincide with the Royal Wedding. £30 to pay for bunting was requested. Mr Rooke to respond.
- 11/69 **Matters for future consideration:** Ventilation in the Village Hall; Dog gates; Notice Board maintenance; Village Gardeners grant request.
69.01 Time was made available in the meeting for PCSO Forrest who stated that there will be regular attendance at meetings henceforth. He reported that the local team is now three strong. They are being active in nipping graffiti artists in the bud; in managing parking, especially around schools; patrolling quiet areas; tackling off-road riding in woods and issuing warnings to potential troublemakers. There will be more public meetings to hear what people want done and he reminded councillors to remind everyone to 'Report it if you see it.' His team can be reached on 0845 8505505.
- 11/70 **Date of Next Meeting:** 18th April 2011

Meeting closed at 21.41 hours.