

Minutes of the meeting of Sonning Common Parish Council held on Monday 18 June 2012 at 20.00 hrs in the Village Hall

Present: Mr Kedge (Chairman); Mr Stoves; Mrs Diwell; Mr Greenwood; Mr Fort; Miss Hunt; Mr Jones; Mrs Lewis; Mrs MacGowan; Mrs Phillips-Tilbury and Mr Reynolds.
Mr P Simms (Henley Standard)

- 13/032 Apologies for absence: Ms Noble (vacation).
- 13/033 Declarations of Interests by Members on Agenda Items: None.
- 13/034 Public Question Time under Section 30 of Standing Orders: None.
- 13/035 The Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 6 June 2012 were presented and ratified.
- 13/036 The Minutes of previous meetings:
022.01 Planning Committee on 21 May and 6 June 2012 were presented and approved.
022.02 Parish Council meeting held on 21 May 2012 were presented and approved.
- 13/037 County Councillor's Report: County Councillor Viney was not present.
- 13/038 District Councillor's Report: Councillor Harrison reported on the progress of the SODC Boundary review; on the new Code of Conduct; on the publication of the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy; on the recovery of monies from Icelandic Banks and on the new garden waste payments service Direct Debit System. Councillor Harrison also spoke on the application to build two pairs of semi-detached houses behind 23c Wood Lane about which he was not optimistic and which is likely to go to committee in August.
- 13/039 Parish Clerk's Report: Noted.
- 13/040 New Code of Conduct: The Parish Council resolved unanimously to:
13/040.1 Adopt the Code of Conduct adopted by South Oxfordshire District Council as the code for members and co-opted members of the Sonning Common Parish Council with effect from 1 July 2012; and
13/040.2 Require the Parish Clerk to notify the monitoring officer of South Oxfordshire District Council of the passing of the above resolution.
- 13/041 Rotherfield United Football Club (RUFC) grant request. It was resolved that the Parish Council shall make a grant under Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 of £7,000 to Rotherfield United Football Club (RUFC) to help with improvements to their sports ground with the three provisos that prior to payment being made:
1. RUFC will issue a binding commitment to donate the designated area (previously agreed and plotted) to the Parish Council on request;
2. That access to the designated area both for pedestrians (from current footpath) and for vehicles (for construction and ongoing maintenance) is included in the commitment above;
3. That a bore hole investigation to be funded by the Parish Council confirms that the designated area is suitable the in-ground construction of a Roller Park.
- 13/042 Neighbourhood Plan: Mr Greenwood told the meeting of the NPWP work done for and during the 'drop-in day' held on 2 June and asked that all members carry out one or more of the surveys themselves, ideally before the next 'drop-in day' on 7 July. Mr Greenwood explained that BDOR had advised and the NPWP has agreed to make a formal application to SODC to be registered as a designated Neighbourhood Plan. The draft letter for this was circulated and it was resolved that it should be sent subject to minor modifications to reflect the state of discussions with neighbouring parishes. (Final version as sent is appended to these minutes.)
- 13/042A Twinning: Under a 10 o'clock motion Mr Kedge informed members of the good progress being made by Jo Quinton's team and of their request for the council to contribute to the cost of refreshments for their public meeting on 10 July. It was resolved to accede to this request.
- 13/043 Matters for future consideration: Mrs Diwell asked that the Report and accounts of the Sonning and District Welfare & Educational Trust be put on the record. Thanks to be given to Mr Stoves and Ms Noble for the progress made in getting footpaths repaired.

The meeting closed at 21.09. The next Meeting will be on Monday 16 July 2012 at 20.00.

Chairman Dated
Mr A Duffield

Dear Mr Duffield

SONNING COMMON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Sonning Common Parish Council wish to apply under the Localism Act 2012 and within the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 for designation to prepare a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Qualifying Body

As a formally established Parish Council we understand that we are a fully qualifying body under the Act and within the Regulations for the purposes of section 61G of the 1990 Act.

Neighbourhood Development Plan Area

The area we propose for the Neighbourhood Development Plan comprises all of the area of the current Parish shown bounded in blue on Map A, attached. Map B shows the fourteen SHLAA sites being assessed, of which SON 13 is actually in Rotherfield Peppard Parish. We are in discussions with our neighbouring parishes of Kidmore End and Rotherfield Peppard seeking their co-operation in this venture. We are not asking them to make any financial contribution.

Explanatory Statement

As one of the recognised 'larger villages' in the South Oxfordshire District we are aware that the emerging Core Strategy identifies Sonning Common for a certain level of new development, as yet not specified in detail. This overall aim is accepted by the Parish Council.

Sonning Common has an active community supported by a good number of local facilities. Though not a particularly historic village it has a distinctive character that local people value greatly. It is also located on the very edge of, if only partly within, the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This adds greatly to its distinctive character. At the same time it is firmly within the main commuting catchment of Reading (and Reading railway station), which further enhances the attractiveness of the village for people to wish to live here.

The existing and heavy pressures for new housing are now being exacerbated by the likely allocations within the strategic planning process and by the perceived 'window of opportunity' for applications while those plans are being finalised. The listing of some of the local sites for housing through the SHLAA process has also placed pressure on locations which, on the basis of a recent appeal decision, are untenable by being outside the built-up area. The location of the village also generates considerable traffic issues for the local community which could be worsened by inappropriate development.

The community produced an informal Community Plan a few years ago and a working group set up with the Parish Council has already started to consider urgent issues of site selection and the volume and nature of new development. Though fully appreciating that new development will happen, there is considerable community concern about the volume, location and design of that development as well as about whether it will contribute as effectively as it should, both directly and indirectly, to the further vitalisation of the community. In particular, and despite a generally strong profile on local facilities, there is a need to ensure that new development contributes to what are recognised as specific deficiencies, for example in relation to sport and leisure provision.

All of the above illustrates that Sonning Common is exactly the sort of place where a Neighbourhood Development Plan is appropriate. We believe that the Parish Council and community have already demonstrated that taking on the responsibility of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan is something they could manage, and manage in a way that helps to support the District Council's strategic objectives.

Unless there are queries with any of the above we assume that procedures will now be put in place to publicise this application. Given the fact that further planning applications and reapplications appear imminent we hope this can be addressed with some urgency.

Yours sincerely
G B Greenwood
Chairman, Planning Committee

Copies to:

J Howell Esq. MP

Councillor Mrs Pearl Slatter – SODC; Councillor The Reverend Angie Paterson – SODC;

Councillor Alan Rooke – SODC; Councillor Paul Harrison – SODC; Anna Robinson Strategic Director - SODC

Chairman, Kidmore End Parish Council; Chairman, Rotherfield Peppard Parish Council