

# Minutes of a special meeting of Sonning Common Parish Council Held on Monday 27 February 2017 in the Village Hall Wood.

Present: Mr Stoves (Chairman); Mrs Diwell; Mr Fort; Mr Greenwood; Mrs Phillips-Tilbury; Mr Rawlins and Mr Rust. Also Mr Collings (Parish Clerk) and two members of the public.

17/144 Apologies for absence: Mr Kedge; Mr Howe; Mr Jones; Mrs Lewis. No declarations of interests

17/145 Public Question Time under Section 30 of Standing Orders. None.

17/146 To consider how the Parish Council should respond to the One Oxfordshire proposal for a new Unitary Authority to replace the existing District and County Councils structure. After all views had been heard there was a unanimous vote for a motion stating that: 'Sonning Common Parish Council opposes the one Oxfordshire proposal and would like to see proposals for a more local solution that is better and more closely aligned to the needs of areas such as ours.'

Key points made by members during the meeting included:

- Even within the present structure we feel that this part of South Oxfordshire is largely ignored by SODC and completely ignored by OCC so an Oxford centric solution is likely to worsen this.
- We are concerned that it would end up with a 'One Shire, one Party and one Mayor' monopoly situation.
- With reduced political representation at a more remote headquarters we can only expect poorer service at a time when our roads and schools are crumbling. The transition period is certain to take the eyes of officers and elected members off the ball to the detriment of all.
- We looked at the Berkshire County Council solution which was to create six unitary authorities of roughly even sizes and we see this working well. The nearest of those is Reading which seems to work well and we note that it is very much smaller geographically and financially than the proposed One Oxfordshire solution.
- The proposal seems to be inherently a reduction in or even a denial of local democracy and there is nothing in it for us as we are too remote (see above).

17/147 To consider how the Parish Council should respond to the proposal to create a new combined cycleway and footpath along the B481 from Bird wood Court to Westleigh Drive. After considerable discussion it was resolved to support the combined footpath and cycleway provided that there is adequate demarcation along its length and that it is well maintained to prevent encroachment from vegetation.

17/148 Matters for future agendas.

Next meeting: Monday 20 March 2017 at 20.00.

Chairman: .....Dated: .....