

Sonning Common Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Sonning Common Parish Council held on Monday 15 October 2018 in the Village Hall.

Present: Mrs Lewis (Chairman); Mr Fort; Mr Greenwood; Mr Kedge; Mr Rinta-Suksi. Also: Mr Collings (Parish Clerk), Mrs Varnes (Deputy Parish Clerk) and Mr McLoughlin (Henley Standard) and one resident.

- 19/076 Apologies for absence: Mrs Diwell; Mrs Godfrey; Mr Howe; Mr Rawlins and Mr Stoves. No declarations. Mrs Lewis announced that Mr Rust has resigned and Mr Jones has retired from the council.
- 19/077 Public Question Time. No questions.
- 19/078 Police Matters – the Parish Clerk reported that no report had been received.
- 19/079 Minutes of previous meetings:
- 079.01 Finance Committees held on 10 October 2018 were presented and approved.
 - 079.02 Planning Committees held on 17 September and 1 October 2018 were presented and approved.
 - 079.03 Parish Council meeting held on 17 September 2018 were presented and approved.
- 19/080 County Councillor's Report. In addition to his report (Appx A) circulated by email, Cllr Bartholomew advised that he is pressing Highways to include Sonning Common and Blounts Court roads in the Highway Maintenance Forward Programme for significant improvement and that he has obtained agreement for an additional OCC Town & Parish Liaison event to be held locally in Sonning Common Village Hall on Thursday 17 January 2019 2pm – 5pm.
- 19/081 District Councillor's Report. Cllr Harrison was unable to attend so his written report is in Appendix B. Cllr Hall attended later and reminded of the importance of making separate applications to both Councillors grant pots.
- 19/082 Parish Clerk's Report – noted.
- 19/083 Memorial Hall Field Working Party (MHFWP) – transfer progressing slowly.
- 19/084 Village Centre Working Party (VCWP) – no update – meeting expected in next few weeks.
- 19/085 Environment Working Party – a detailed written update from Mr Rust was circulated and will be progressed by Mr Stoves.
- 19/086 Report on CAGE appeal – no news yet.
- 19/087 Budget inputs and matters for future agendas – the Parish Clerk asked members to send him ideas and requirements for the budgeting process. Mr Fort asked that the Neighbourhood Plan should be on every agenda going forward.
- 19/088 Staffing matters – it was resolved to implement the NALC agreed pay scales for all staff backdated to 5 April.

Next meeting: Monday 19 November 2018 at 20.00.

Chairman: Dated:

Appendix A - REPORT TO SONNING COMMON PARISH COUNCIL OCT 2018 FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

GENERAL OCC REPORT

CABINET APPROVES £120M ROAD AND BUILDING REPAIR FUNDING PROPOSAL

OCC's cabinet has agreed to borrow up to £120m to invest in infrastructure improvements – easing the spending squeeze on road and property repairs. A report presented to Cabinet in September acknowledged that under-investment has resulted in significant reduction in quality of major and minor roads, as well as pavements, with an increase in car damage and personal injury claims. Residents regularly say that they want to see improvements to the roads, and the investment proposal means the whole county would benefit from a 'growth dividend'. The decision means around £80m could be spent on highway improvements, with the rest of the £120m used to invest in other county council-owned assets especially schools. Detailed business cases will be produced for each proposed project funded from the investment pot. It will be paid for using Oxfordshire's expected growth in homes and consequent council tax income and gives scope to 'borrow to invest' that will, over the long term, save money. As the borrowing will be taken over a number of years, based on individual business cases, the programme of investment can be stopped if the increased Council Tax revenue does not materialise.

CABINET APPROVES PROPOSAL TO MAKE THE COUNCIL 'FIT FOR THE FUTURE'

OCC will get a complete overhaul to ensure it is 'fit for the future' and continues to meet rising demand for services. The changes are crucial to enabling the county council to deliver its vision of 'thriving communities for everyone'. The Cabinet has accepted the business case for a new 'operating model' and will consider how it will be implemented at the October Cabinet meeting.

The transformation plan would protect and improve frontline services for residents, while cutting red tape and reducing the costs of 'back office' administration. The proposed redesign of the county council could save between £34m-58m a year and ensure a continued balanced budget, with the possibility of reinvesting in services in the future. The detailed business case for implementing the new operating model currently estimates a potential reduction of approximately 600-890 full time equivalent posts at the council over a two to three-year period. The council's annual staff turnover is about 650 posts so the number of compulsory redundancies is likely to be much fewer. Customer service, supported by new technology, would be at the heart of the proposed new 'operating model' to make the council much more efficient. Residents contacting the council would see improved customer service with use of digital technology freeing up time for specialist staff to provide personalised services where needed.

IMPROVEMENTS FOR DELAYED TRANSFER OF CARE FROM HOSPITAL

The latest snapshot of delayed transfer of care figures on September 13 showed there were 79 delayed patients in Oxfordshire – a 31% fall on the same period last year. The previous week there 77 representing a sustained and significant fall from 2017 when the highest local recorded weekly figure was 202. Based on the latest NHS published data, Oxfordshire is the 11th most improved system in the country, with a reduction of 58% in the number of bed days lost – more than twice the national average of 25%. This turnaround is attributed to a revitalised joined-up approach between NHS teams and the County Council ensuring that patients leave hospital as soon as they are medically fit to do so.

RESPONSE TO ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE OXFORD-CAMBRIDGE EXPRESSWAY

OCC welcomes the announcement of a preferred Corridor for part of the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway as it offers a degree of clarity on where the final scheme would go but is very disappointed that access to the M40 through Oxfordshire is still unclear. Highways England, who are leading on this national project, have identified Corridor B as their proposal, the central corridor from the three broad corridors being considered. However, there is still no indication on which of the sub-options around Oxford would be taken forward. OCC will now carefully study the Corridor put forward, including the justification and technical detail which has led to this choice, and how it would affect already stretched roads, such as the A34 and interface with other schemes including East West Rail. OCC has set three tests to assess the decision-making process for that corridor and, eventually, the final route choice:

- Impact on the A34: it should provide relief to congestion on the A34 and function as a separate strategic route, allowing the A34 around Oxford to work better for local traffic
- Pressure on existing roads: It should not increase pressure on overstretched roads
- Conflation with other schemes: It should be developed separately but alongside other local schemes, to ensure the highway network works for Oxfordshire overall

Invariably, a project of this magnitude and ambition will have an impact, which OCC will need to ensure is mitigated. OCC will seek clarity on how the corridor choice is developed so that a decision can be made on the best route for the scheme

COUNCILS JOIN UP TO PRODUCE A SPATIAL PLAN FOR OXFORDSHIRE UP TO 2050

Oxfordshire's councils are working jointly on a countywide strategic plan which integrates planning for growth and infrastructure, with a focus on quality of life and health and wellbeing. At the September meeting, Cabinet approved a scoping document for the creation of the joint strategic spatial plan (JSSP), which will be considered by the districts and city council in the coming weeks. The JSSP will address the strategic and cumulative implications of growth and set out a long-term framework covering the whole of Oxfordshire up to 2050. It will set out future housing requirements and identify strategic locations or broad areas for future growth. The JSSP will not allocate specific sites for development (any such decision to do this would require the explicit agreement of all the local authorities). Detailed local policies will be covered by future Local Plan reviews as necessary. OCC's role as highways and education authority, and as a provider of many essential services to the communities and businesses, makes it particularly relevant as a key player in the JSSP preparation process. Sustainable transport that create places where people can walk and cycle will underpin the JSSP. The six Oxfordshire Councils and the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OXLEP) under the Oxfordshire Growth Board agreed the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal with Government in March 2018. Under the terms of the Deal the local authorities have committed to producing the JSSP for submission to the Planning Inspectorate for independent examination by 31 March 2020 and adoption by 31 March 2021. Early stakeholder engagement starts this Autumn and a public consultation is due in 2019 first on preferred options and then a proposed draft of the joint plan.

SPECIFIC REPORT FOR SONNING COMMON P18/S1399/FUL - 'VINE LODGE', PEPPARD HILL

Although just on the other side of the parish boundary at the top of Gravel Hill, the PC may wish to have an update on the fencing erected on the triangular development site between Stoke Row Road and the B481. I have received many complaints about the inappropriate nature of the fencing and the impact the fence has on drivers' sight lines. The fencing was erected contrary to planning conditions and is subject to a retrospective application. OCC Highways lodged a holding objection until the line of sight/visibility issues are clarified, but this matter has now been dragging on for months and it is for the SODC Enforcement Team to escalate the matter.

COUNCILLOR PRIORITY FUND

As previously advised, I have £5k available for Sonning Common to match-fund Highways projects. This means if the parish council identifies Highways works costing a total of £10k, I will meet half the cost from my fund. If the works are costed via OCC Highways and undertaken by them, all that is needed is my agreement to proceed; if works are costed and undertaken by third-parties an approval form on the OCC website will need to be completed. I have been copied on emails relating to the reinstatement of granite setts and wish to check the PC has received the information it needs.

Appendix B District Councillor's Report October 2018

Capital Grants applications open

Our Capital Grants scheme opened on Monday 1 October and we are encouraging any groups with a project which could benefit from this funding to get in touch with our Grants Team before they start an application.

There's £145,000 available to help fund a variety of facilities and improvements, such as upgrading a community hall or improving a play area. For more information see our grants pages.

Cooking oil recycling

We've just introduced a new cooking oil recycling service for residents as part of our food waste collections.

After cooking and once it has cooled, any leftover oil can be poured into a plastic bottle no bigger than one litre in size. The bottle and its contents can then be placed into the kerbside food waste caddy, along with other food waste, and put out for the weekly collection. For those who don't want to use a plastic bottle, oil can also be poured straight into the caddy along with other food waste.

One litre of cooking oil can generate enough electricity to make 240 cups of tea!

£1.2million recovered

During 2017/18 we recovered more than £1.2million in council tax arrears. This was thanks to tough enforcement action we took against non-payers.

We issued 5,000 court summonses to people who had repeatedly failed or refused to pay their council tax.

Magistrates then granted liability orders against almost 4,000 of those individuals meaning we could take enforcement action, including the use of bailiffs, to retrieve the money. We of course offer support to those who are genuinely struggling to pay.

Letter to minister on Affordable Housing

You'll remember a motion carried at Council last month that requested that Cllr Jane Murphy sent a letter to the Minister of Housing about the definition of Affordable Housing. Cllr Murphy sent the letter last month and you can read it here.

<https://ebtk.co.uk/resources/stats/click.php?c=2636&e=61&o=9492&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2F5bfif07ul3giip%2FLetter%2520to%2520James%2520Brockenshire%2520re%2520affordable%2520housing%2520170818.pdf%3Fdl%3D0&a=0>

Three-year housing land supply

Following a consultation in July, councils in Oxfordshire now only need to provide a three-year supply of land for housing, instead of the five-year supply normally required by the government.

The government has agreed to this change while we work together with the other Oxfordshire Councils on a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan, the document that will address how we collectively plan to deliver 100,000 homes across the county by 2031, which was agreed as part of the Oxfordshire Growth Deal.

This means it is now much less likely for developers to win planning permission on appeal after we have rejected their applications.

Response to letter from Minister of State for Housing

You may have seen media coverage of our letters from both South and Vale Leaders who sent their responses to providing proposals on housing growth in our districts to support the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge Corridor.

You can download a copy of the minister's letter here.

<https://ebtk.co.uk/resources/stats/click.php?c=2636&e=61&o=9492&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2F45tutfcig1ztdm%2F2018-08-09%2520New%2520Settlements%2520letter%2520to%2520leaders%2520from%2520Kit%2520Malthouse%2520MP.pdf%3Fdl%3D0&a=0>

For South, the letter from Cllr Jane Murphy can be found here

https://ebtk.co.uk/resources/stats/click.php?c=2636&e=61&o=9492&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2Fcikez8v117iicca%2F2018-08-15%2520Jane%2520Murphy%2520letter%2520to%2520Kit%2520Malthouse%2520MP_0.pdf%3Fdl%3D0&a=0

and her summary statement released here.

<https://ebtk.co.uk/resources/stats/click.php?c=2636&e=61&o=9492&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.southoxon.gov.uk%2Fnews%2F2018%2F2018-08%2Fleader-statement-response-letter-minister-state-housing&a=0>