

Long Wittenham Parish Council meeting held on 16th November 2023

Present: Chairman Steve Brown, Cllr Steve Bolton, Cllr David Corney, Cllr Peter Rose, Cllr Mark Thompson, Cllr Liz Yuille, RFO Clifford Bosley District Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye.

In attendance: Martin Elliff (clerk) and 6 members of the public.

The chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2023/169 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

County Cllr Peter Sudbury.

2023/170 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- Residents Dr Jean Bidlot and Dr Chinene Kimber-Bidlot were present to express their concern regarding the prospective housing development at the junction of Sires Hill and Ladygrove which, if approved, will surround their property, Wigbolds. See section 2023/176 below.
- Resident Richard May was present to ask who is responsible for maintaining the raised walkway by Home Farm. The chairman confirmed that it is the responsibility of OCC.

2023/171 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Cllr Bolton declared his interest as treasurer of Long Wittenham Athletic Club.

2023/172 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Parish Council resolved to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 19th October 2023.

2023/173 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

- Bonfire Night 2024: Cllr Yuille reported that it may be possible for the fireworks display to be covered under the council's insurance, but she needs more information so that the insurance company can give an opinion.
- Thermal Camera: Cllr Thompson had circulated a suggested post for the website inviting residents who would like a free external thermal imaging check of their property to contact him. Approved.
- Acklings groundworks: The chairman had circulated a quotation of £5,140 from All Aspects to make good the Pump Track, enlarge the basketball court and remove the sinking concrete slab at the end of the cricket pitch. This had been agreed by the council by email. These works have been completed.

Actions:	Cllr Yuille to seek more information about the fireworks display from Emma Newman. Clerk to post the thermal imaging check invitation on the website.
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2023/174 REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Cllr Casey-Rerhaye's report sent by email is attached in Appendix A. She also reported that the owners of The Grange are understood to be preparing a planning application in regard to their dilapidated barn.

2023/175 REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR

None.

2023/176 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

P23/S3673/SCR Land to the South of Sires Hill Didcot NRR
- The prospective development appears to contravene two policies in the NDP. Planning officers at SODC and the PC's NDP consultant have been consulted and Cllr Rose will seek further advice from Ricardo Rios at SODC before the council formulates a response to the application.

Actions: Council to formulate response to planning application P23/S3673/SCR.

2023/177 COMMUNITY HUB

Cllr Rose reported that the planning application has still not been approved. Two outstanding issues with OCC are expected to be resolved soon. However, SODC's Viability Report, only received recently, is at odds with Thomas Homes' (TH) own report. TH will meet with SODC next week to try to resolve the conflicts. If this is not possible, it may be necessary to go to appeal. This is frustrating but the S106 legal agreements would also have to be dealt with as part of that process, so the overall time delay may not be too significant.

2023/178 CIL PROJECTS

- Acklings Playground:
Claire Michellis has created a draft brief for Jupiter, the company with whom she works. It has quoted £1,125 to create a zoned design with options which can then be sent out for tender to equipment providers. Cllr Yuille asked if the draft brief could be sent directly to the equipment companies and avoid the design cost. It is understood that the brief cannot be used in this way. After discussion, the council agreed to fund the design.
- Allotments:
It was agreed that the allotments at the western end of the village need some clearance to open up new plots and a water supply. The chairman will seek quotations for this work.

Actions: Chairman to seek quotes for allotment clearance and the provision of a water supply.

2023/179 LONG WITTENHAM TO CLIFTON HAMPDEN CYCLE PATH

Cllrs Corney and Thompson reported that they have met with the main stakeholders who are sympathetic to the idea of creating a permissive path on both the Buxton land and the Gibbs Estate land in lieu of the full cycle path. It is hoped to have a clear decision regarding a possible permissive footpath by Christmas. As well as the main cost of the ramp from the path to the road, there will be some cost for gates etc. There are also some issues concerning public liability which need to be resolved. The council agreed in principle to funding any costs as needed.

2023/180 BODKINS LEASE

Some members of the Athletic Club had questioned whether all activities at the club are permitted under the lease. The council agreed that there is no need to amend the lease as long as it is advised in advance of any activities that might fall outside the terms of the lease.

2023/181 ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE (ACV)

The re-application for ACV status for The Plough Inn had been rejected by a Community Enablement Officer at SODC on the grounds that it does not meet the criteria required. On consideration, it was agreed that, in the event that The Plough

was put up for sale, it is unlikely that the community would be able to raise the funds to purchase it. It was therefore agreed not to further attempt to renew the ACV status.

2023/182 ACKLINGS WOODLAND ADVENTURE SITE

The recent RoSPA report suggested that the site should be checked weekly. The Pre-School has confirmed that they only check the site during term-time in Spring and Summer. It was agreed to check the site as part of the council weekly playground checks.

2023/183 DEFIBRILLATOR TELEPHONE BOX

Alan Brown, the resident who carries out the monthly check of the defibrillator in the telephone box on the High Street, has suggested that the telephone box is in need of some maintenance. Specifically, some of the panes of glass let in water and it needs repainting. It was agreed to ask Gary Carberry to quote for the work.

Actions: Clerk to ask Gary Carberry to quote for the telephone box maintenance.

2023/184 STAFF PAY AWARDS

The chairman reported that he had agreed pay rises with the clerk and RFO in line with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) recommendations. Approved.

2023/185 COUNCIL MEETING DATES 2024

The council approved the following meeting dates for next year:

Thursday 18th January 2024
Thursday 15th February 2024
Thursday 21st March 2024
Thursday 18th April 2024
Thursday 16th May 2024
Thursday 20th June 2024
Thursday 18th July 2024
Thursday 19th September 2024
Thursday 17th October 2024
Thursday 21st November 2024
Thursday 19th December 2024

2023/186 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

None.

2023/187 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS

- Bodkins Car Spring Rider: Cllr Bolton reported that the rider cannot be repaired easily. It was suggested that the company that installed it, Creative Play, be asked to quote for a repair.

Actions: Clerk to ask Creative Play for a quote to repair the Car Spring Rider.

2023/188 MATTERS ARISING FROM CHAIRMAN

The chairman reported that he has had discussions with Janet Haylett as secretary of the PCC and Thomas Homes' biodiversity consultant with a view to establishing a new management plan for Wards Field so that it can be identified as a biodiversity offset for the Community Hub.

2023/189 FINANCIAL REPORT

● Expenditure during October	
02/10/2023 CIL Expenditure (LWAC Clubhouse Extension)	£17,500.00
02/10/2023 SLCC Inv MEM245655-1 (Membership)	£112.00
06/10/2023 Sign Wizzard Inv 37544 (Speedwatch Signs)	£219.93
02/10/2023 Elliff Expenses (Website Hosting & Domain renewal)	£44.75
02/10/2023 Clear Inv LCO01596 (Insurance)	£543.38
16/10/2023 Clerk's Salary October 2023	£336.73
16/10/2023 Toppesfield Inv 32462 (Bodkins & Crescent Resurfacing)	£23,323.24
19/10/2023 Bosley Expenses (Payroll)	£140.00
19/10/2023 Elliff Expenses (Land Registry Deeds & Plan)	£12.00
October Expenditure Total	£42,232.03

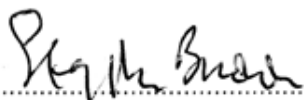
2023/190 ANY MATTERS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

Depending on Cllr Rose's discussions with Ricardo Rios of SODC, it may be necessary to review the NDP to maintain its efficacy.

Meeting Closed at 9:35pm.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 14th December 2023

Signed:



Date:

14-12-23

District Councillor Report November 2023 Sam Casey-Rerhaye

SODC strategic plan for 2024-29

We are starting work on our next "corporate" plan which sets out our priorities and strategic themes until 2029. There will be formal consultations in the future, but if you, your community group or organisation would like to share views informally, please do get in touch. The current plan is here: <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/SODC-Corporate-Plan-2020-2024.pdf>

SODC pledge our ongoing commitment for paying staff at least the Real Living Wage

All directly employed council staff have received at least the Real Living Wage for several years, to help to reduce in-work poverty. The Real Living Wage (currently £10.90 an hour) is based on the cost of living – considering the current cost of household goods and services. In October, councillors unanimously passed a cross-party motion on the Real Living Wage. SODC will now work towards accreditation as a Living Wage employer with the Living Wage Foundation. This includes ensuring all future companies seeking to win council contracts are committed to paying, as a minimum, the Real Living Wage. Whilst it is not in our power to change existing contracts, we will urge our current suppliers and contractors to follow our example and commit to the Real Living Wage.



UK Government climate target u-turns will impact us all

In 2019 SODC declared a 'climate emergency' with the ambition of becoming a net zero council by 2025, and a net zero district by 2030, in anticipation of a concerted national response to the climate emergency. In 2021 SODC declared an 'ecological emergency', following ongoing global heating and drastic declines in biodiversity, concerns which seriously harm the natural environment and place additional burdens on local communities.

The 2021 Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire report stated that 'all net-zero pathways will involve [...] a major programme of retrofit for existing homes and non domestic buildings [...] and the phase out of gas boilers and fossil-fuelled modes of transport'.

Chris Skidmore MP's independent review of net zero found that "net zero is the growth opportunity of the 21st century" and "the economy and climate change are intertwined". In July 2023, the Office for Budget Responsibility found that continuing our dependence on gas at the current levels would cost at least as much as acting on climate change. In other words, tackling climate change would be **at worst cost neutral, but probably save the country money**. And that's not even counting the other benefits to health from making the green transition.

However, the UK Government has now regrettably reduced its climate targets, ignoring its own Committee on Climate Change's advice. It has delayed the ban on installing oil, LPG and solid fuel boilers by nine years, delayed the phase out of sales of new internal combustion engine cars by five, and abandoned the energy efficiency requirements on private landlords. These measures will make it incredibly difficult for the district to become net zero by 2030.

- Net zero initiatives can save residents money, for instance the upfront costs of home insulation can be covered by lower energy bills within a very short time frame, especially when grants are used.
- Delaying net zero targets harms business and industry certainty, and therefore impacts investment in green technology, skills, and infrastructure.

As a result, SODC needs to consider the impact of the UK Government's u-turn on net zero on the council and district, our net zero ambitions and the production of our next Climate and Nature Recovery Action Plan in 2024. SODC's Leader has also written to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, requesting a regulatory impact assessment of the outcome of their policy changes, and to seek an assurance and rationale for how they consider these policy changes to be compliant with their statutory obligations to meet current and future carbon budgets.

Thermal Imaging Camera for loan and online forum to support home energy efficiency upgrades

As the weather gets colder, SODC will be lending out our thermal imaging camera to community groups and parishes. The camera can be used to identify spots in buildings where heat is escaping and where energy-saving measures could help make a place more comfortable and reduce fuel bills at the same time.

On Tuesday 14 November at 6-7.15pm there will be free online forum to help councils and community groups support residents to reduce energy use and costs. Speakers will highlight the support that is available and share inspiring local projects to help residents. There will be an opportunity to ask questions.

For more information on both, email climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk.

Grants to help towards energy saving measures for the home

As the cold weather starts to set in, we are promoting Welcome the Warmth - which offers a variety of fully funded energy efficiency measures including insulation, solar panels and heat pumps for those on a lower household income. The good news is that the income eligibility cap for the Oxfordshire scheme, including South and Vale residents, is now £39,000 (up from £31,000) which should mean that many more people are eligible to receive the help. Please help spread the word – **for more details, see the Welcome the Warmth website**.

New grant to help people stay warm and fed this winter

We have launched a new food and warmth grant will help support people in our communities this winter who may otherwise struggle to afford essential things.

The grant is aimed at local voluntary and community groups, and town and parish councils, who can use it to support those most in need in the districts. Organisations can apply for grants between £2,000 to £5,000, or up to £10,000 for collaborative projects between groups of two or more organisations. The grant can fund projects providing food and warmth to people who may otherwise struggle to access these crucial essentials over the winter.

The grant can cover capital and revenue costs for projects that support people with food and warmth, such as buying food and essential supplies such as household cleaning products, toiletries, hot water bottles and blankets and cooking equipment such as saucepans and slow cookers. Projects might also include cooking clubs, gardening clubs and educational activities that promote healthy food choices and saving energy.

The grant scheme opened week commencing 23 October 2023 and closes at midday 27 November 2023. Decisions are expected to be made within four weeks.

Support is also available through the councils' Community Hub. If you need support, call our friendly Community Hub Team during office hours on 01235 422600 (option 3) or email communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk

Free Carbon Emissions Calculator Tool

We've launched a free simple-to-use carbon emissions calculator tool for town and parish councils to measure their current carbon emissions using energy and fuel bills. It makes it easy to work out where carbon and cost savings can be made.

For more information, email climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk

Funding available for rural businesses and organisations via the Council

A new grant scheme has launched for rural businesses and organisations based in South Oxfordshire.

The fund is designed to support capital projects for small businesses and community infrastructure that help to improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities. Grant funding is available for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas, growing the local social economy and supporting innovation, investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups.

Example projects include the diversification of farm buildings outside of agriculture, establishment of rural community businesses and net-zero infrastructure.

The Council have secured this funding through the government's Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF).

Town and Parish Councils, public sector organisations, higher and further education institutions, private sector companies, registered charities, constituted community-based organisations, social enterprises (like CICs) are all eligible to apply.

Interested parties are encouraged to submit their application **before midday on Friday 24 November 2023** by visiting the South Oxfordshire District Council

Affordable housing grant to help address urgent need

As part of the District council's work to help meet the urgent need for genuinely affordable housing in the region, local developers, Community Land Trusts and self-builders can apply for a Section 106 affordable housing grant to build affordable homes that meet the councils' climate criteria.

We have approved an improvement to the existing affordable housing policy to enable funds from Section 106 developer contributions to be used as a grant to build affordable homes that are energy efficient and cheaper for residents to live in and heat.

The new application form now includes questions which determine how projects will minimise energy use and carbon emissions, as well as how they have identified locally appropriate species



and set up long term management plans if they are adding tree planting and biodiversity improvements. These are necessary to help achieve the Corporate Plan objectives of the council to take action to tackle the climate emergency to 'protect and restore our natural world'.

In South Oxfordshire, Section 106 developer contributions have previously been provided to the Henley and District Housing Trust to develop properties for social rent and to fit solar panels to reduce their carbon footprint.

Celebrate Christmas at Cornerstone

Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot has a busy Christmas programme, starting on Sunday 3 December as part of the Play2Give Didcot Festive Market in the Market Place next door to Cornerstone. Thames Con and Cornerstone present a fun and festive afternoon, showing one of the greatest Christmas movies of all time, A Muppets Christmas Carol from 3pm. Shows and music carry on right up to Christmas Eve.

All the details about the Christmas Shows can be found on the Cornerstone website or pop into the centre and speak to the Box Office Team.

sam.casey-rerhaye@southoxon.gov.uk

01235 635566