

Long Wittenham Parish Council meeting held on 18th January 2024

Present: Cllr Steve Bolton, Cllr David Corney, Cllr Peter Rose, Cllr Mark Thompson, RFO Clifford Bosley, District Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye, County Cllr Pete Sudbury.

In attendance: Martin Elliff (clerk) and 3 members of the public.

In the absence of the chairman, Cllr Rose took the chair and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2024/001 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Chairman Steve Brown, Cllr Liz Yuille.

2024/002 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- Kenny and Lucy Harding were present to make the council aware of their plan to build a house on Northfield Lane on the field next to Long Wittenham Athletic Club. A planning consultant has provided a design. The next stage is a pre-application to SODC to check that the plan is viable. Cllr Rose pointed out that the location is not identified as a development site in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Resident Jim Brown had emailed before the meeting expressing his disappointment with the state of Acklings Playground. Specifically, he asked that a sign be erected near the picnic table reminding people to dispose of rubbish properly, that the brambles near the picnic table be cut back and that the pallet next to the basketball court be removed. The council felt that a sign was unlikely to reduce littering, but, it was agreed to look into cutting back the brambles and to have the pallet removed as soon as possible.
- Resident Andrew Wilson had emailed before the meeting expressing his concern at the deterioration of the surface of the roads around the village. He suggested that an independent survey be carried out and sent to SODC or that CIL funds be used to carry out repairs. Chairman Brown had pointed out by email that OCC is responsible for roads maintenance, not SODC or the PC, and that the use of CIL funds would be inappropriate. The council agreed. Cllr Rose and Chairman Brown will draft a response to Mr Wilson and circulate it for approval.
- Resident Emma Newman had emailed before the meeting to confirm that she will run this year's Bonfire Night using Illusion Fireworks to provide the display at a cost of £2,500, assuming that the PC would underwrite the firework cost and that the Athletic Club would not be running its own event. Cllr Bolton confirmed that the club will not hold a Bonfire Night this year. The council agreed to underwrite the firework cost.
- Resident Prew Bowtell had emailed before the meeting asking if Sunday 28th April was a free date for this year's Fun Run. The council does not maintain an events diary for the village, but no councillors were aware of any existing events planned for this date. She also asked the council to investigate the possibility of having a full size post box installed in the village. Cllr Liz Yuille had offered by email to do this.
- Resident Keiran Murphy had emailed before the meeting pointing out that the cover on the noticeboard at the end of Fieldside had been significantly damaged by the weather. Chairman Brown and his son have effected appropriate repairs.

Actions:	Cllrs Rose and Brown to draft response to Andrew Wilson. Cllr Yuille to investigate having a full size post box installed in the village.
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2024/003 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

2024/004 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Parish Council resolved to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 14th December 2023.

2024/005 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

- The clerk had chased Nick Caw for his business plan for the new village hall but has had no response.
- The clerk reminded councillors to provide details of reliable local contractors in order to compile a list for PC use.
- The chairman has drafted a letter reminding residents to cut back overgrown hedges. This will be finalised with the clerk for distribution.
- The clerk had a response from Bates Wells solicitors suggesting an estimated cost of £6,000 to £9,000 to set-up a Charitable Trust for the new village hall, on the same lines as for the current hall. They also suggested that a meeting with their village hall specialist might be useful to discuss other options. This would cost an estimated £500 (plus VAT).
- Cllr Corney has been in touch with OCC with a view to setting up another speed survey. He is in discussion with residents to confirm the desired location.
- OCC has agreed to install bollards on the verge in front of the war memorial, the cost being split between it and the PC. The PC has already paid its share - £899.25 (incl VAT). The works are expected to be completed mid to late February.
- Cllr Rose has emailed the Bursar of Headington School with a view to him attending a PC meeting but has had no response.
- The clerk confirmed that the application for the 2024-25 Precept had been submitted.

2024/006 REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Cllr Casey-Rerhaye's report sent by email is attached in Appendix A.

There was discussion about the best way for the council to review and comment on the Joint Local Plan. Cllr Casey-Rerhaye suggested that attendance of one of the 'drop-in' sessions would be beneficial. She also said that she has requested a presentation of the plan that summarises the key points. She will forward it as soon as possible.

Cllr Casey-Rerhaye reported that the owners of The Grange had been sent a letter by SODC asking them what they intend to do about the deteriorating barn and whether they intend to submit a planning application. A response has been requested by the beginning of March.

Actions:	Councillors to attend a Joint Local Plan 'drop-in' event where possible.
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2024/007 REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Cllr Sudbury reported that the HIF1 enquiry is set to begin on 20th February. He understands that if the road is built, access over Clifton Hampden Bridge will be restricted to residents and visitors.

Cllr Corney asked him why, with so many new cycle routes proposed in Oxfordshire, the cycle path to Clifton Hampden was not one of them. Cllr Sudbury said that he will continue to champion it.

Cllr Sudbury was made aware of the state of the roads around the village following the floods and was asked to support any request for immediate repairs to OCC. He agreed.

2024/008 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

None.

2024/009 COMMUNITY HUB

Cllr Rose reported that the planning application is still held up because of the differences between SODC's and Thomas Homes' viability reports. A meeting is set for 23rd January to try to resolve the differences. If this fails, the likelihood is that Thomas Homes will take it to appeal.

The revised NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) was published just before Christmas and it moves the timeline for NDP security from two years to five years. It was agreed to begin the review of our NDP in September 2026.

2024/010 CIL PROJECTS

● **Acklings Playground:**

Cllr Rose reported that the design from Jupiter was received just before Christmas. It was very disappointing as it does not include any of the suggestions made in the design brief. Cllrs Rose and Brown met with Claire Michelis to agree a response and Jupiter has been contacted asking them to produce a new design. This is awaited.

2024/011 LONG WITTENHAM TO CLIFTON HAMPDEN CYCLE/PERMISSIVE PATH

Cllrs Corney and Thompson reported that the Gibbs Estate has so far not provided permission for the permissive path. They will chase the land agent at the end of January. Meanwhile, they have had a quote for both clearing the roadside vegetation and levelling the roadside footpath from one contractor, and are pursuing a second quote from another.

Given the growth in approved cyclepaths recently, and wishing to stay in touch with any possible funding, they have written to Rebecca Crowe from OCC and asked for a meeting to learn more about its plans but so far have had no response.

2024/012 ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE (ACV) – ACKLINGS PLAYGROUND

The ACV on Acklings Playground expires in April 2024. Given that the current lease from St John's runs until 2029 and a new ACV would only run for five years, it was agreed not to renew it.

2024/013 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

It had been agreed before the meeting that supervision of the Logs Unlimited grounds maintenance contract will pass from Cllr Corney to Cllr Bolton.

2024/014 COUNCILLOR RECRUITMENT

Cllr Corney said that he has someone in mind who may be persuaded to join the council. He will approach her. In the meantime, it was agreed to post the vacancy on the website and put posters on the village noticeboards.

Actions:	Clerk to post council vacancy on the website and noticeboards.
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2024/015 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

None.

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2024/016 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS

- Emergency Plan: In Cllr Yuille's absence, it was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

2024/017 MATTERS ARISING FROM CHAIRMAN

None.

2024/018 FINANCIAL REPORT

- The RFO had circulated the third quarter accounts before the meeting. Approved.
- Expenditure during December

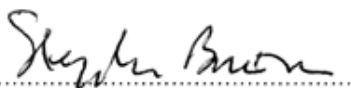
06/12/2023	Logs Unlimited Inv 230610	£298.54
08/12/2023	Creative Play Inv 28256 (Bodkins Rocker Seat Repair)	£552.00
11/12/2023	Clerk's Salary December 2023	£548.51
20/12/2023	Grant 019 Oxfordshire South & Vale Citizens Advice	£300.00
27/12/2023	OCC Inv 3920686796 (War Memorial Verge Bollards)	£899.25
December Expenditure Total		£2,598.30

2024/019 ANY MATTERS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

- Cllr Corney wondered if the council should be concerned about the problems at Clifton Hampden Surgery. It was agreed to monitor the situation.

Meeting Closed at 9:05pm.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 15th February 2024

Signed: 

Date: 15-2-24

APPENDIX A

District Councillor Report January 2024 Sam Casey-Rerhaye

Happy New Year to you all!

Joint Local Plan 2041

The public consultation for the next stage of our new Local Development Plan (joint with the Vale) **launched on 10th January**. I encourage everyone to have a look, especially to the 'In a Nutshell' part. Please submit feedback using the very user-friendly new online platform.

A direct link to the consultation document is: <https://jlp.southandvale.gov.uk/>

A direct link to the Emerging Policies map is <https://jlp.southandvale.gov.uk/pages/policies-map>

There are events planned across the District to make it easier for people to look at the documents and suggested plans. This is the 'Preferred Options' stage.

We will ask for people's thoughts on proposed approaches across various policy areas, from reducing carbon emissions and nature recovery, to protecting and enhancing local heritage, meeting community infrastructure and transport needs, affordable housing, jobs and economic

opportunities, and more. New policy areas which previous local plans haven't covered include policies to protect valued landscapes, tranquil places and dark skies.

Backed by extensive feedback gathered in 2022, newly commissioned studies and the latest industry research, the councils are proposing to reduce the number of new houses needed each year, improve minimum standards for water and energy efficiency, increase biodiversity and the number of affordable houses developments need to deliver, and more.

Warm spaces

Residents needing a warm place this winter are welcome to come to our leisure centres, which are opening up as Warm Spaces again this year.

The following centres are available for people to come to charge their phones, have a warm drink and a friendly chat:

- **South Oxfordshire:** Abbey Sports Centre, Didcot Wave, Henley Leisure Centre, Parks Sports Center and Thame Leisure Centre.
- **Vale of White Horse:** Wantage Leisure Centre, Faringdon Leisure Centre and White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre.

The Warm Spaces scheme will run from **9am-2pm on weekdays** in the café and communal areas of the centres. All the centres have been registered on the official **Warm Spaces website**

Progress on climate and nature projects

Our climate & nature advisory committee (known as CEEAC) meets twice each year and the meeting in December considered reports on the progress the council is making. The Climate Action Team and their colleagues have been **focusing on saving energy at leisure centres** (which make about 40% of our emissions) by using existing systems more efficiently and using grants to add renewable energy systems and other carbon saving measures like replacing halogen bulbs with LEDs and installing destratification fans which don't consume much energy around the pool side which slowly push rising air back down and keep the centre warmer. This had recently been completed at Didcot Wave and will be monitored to see how well it works.

The Committee heard about the **Reconnecting Bernwood, Otmoor and the Ray project which was presented by Alison Offord from Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)**. The area was highlighted as one of the priority strategic scale landscapes to focus on nature recovery effort and the current boundary brought together a number of existing conservation target areas and biodiversity opportunity areas across the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire borders. The committee agreed to advise our Cabinet to support this project in any way the Council can.

Progress on **'retrofitting homes' to save energy and reduce carbon emissions** was another item for the committee. The team have been adding information about improving the energy efficiency of homes and businesses to the Climate Action Oxfordshire website. They have published a briefing on retrofitting homes and community buildings which summarises the retrofitting support and funding that is available to help district, town and parish councillors to promote energy efficiency and retrofitting advice in their areas. The guide is available on the South website. They have hosted two webinars for town and parish councils and community groups - the first of these took place in July and focused on improving the energy efficiency of community buildings. Recordings of the presentations are available, again on our website. The second took place in November and focused on how groups can support and encourage retrofitting of homes in their areas.

Didcot Garden Town team is organising **an energy champion training session** with the Low Carbon Hub – local community groups and organisations are being invited to train as energy champions.

The Council has **two thermal cameras** that community groups and town and parish councils can borrow free of charge. Demand has continued to be high, with the cameras already reserved for most of the 2023/24 season.

South and Vale councils each have £100,000 to spend in 2024/25 for 'green' skills courses to enable at least 50 residents to gain a 'green' qualification or complete a relevant skills course.

The committee has also planned a number of working groups on specific topics for the next year: Waste Strategy Task and Finish Group (held on 28 November) • Climate and Nature Recovery Action Plan Joint T&F group on 15 January 24 • Waste strategy - potential follow up session. • Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy • Climate Adaptation and Resilience actions the District council can take.

If you would like to read these reports along with the carbon savings measurements, please see the agenda for CEEAC here: Agenda for Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee on Monday, 11 December 2023, 6.00 pm (southoxon.gov.uk)

Local green spaces grants available

A reminder in case you know a local volunteer group or community organisation focused on nature recovery and biodiversity. They could be eligible for funding from SODC. We've teamed up with the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE) to manage the applications. The next deadline for applications is **8 January 2024**. For more information please contact Rachel at TOE on admin@trustforoxfordshire.org.uk.

Grant scheme for people without gas boilers

For residents who live in homes without gas boilers - they may be eligible for energy efficiency upgrades for their home, such as insulation, solar panels and heat pumps, all funded by the Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2). These upgrades can help to reduce energy bills and make homes easier to keep warm. **The grants are available to homeowners and landlords whose properties are not heated by gas boilers, with a household income of less than £39,000 and with a low energy rating (D-G).** Please spread the word and ask people to visit welcomethewarmth.org.uk to find out more.

Spring has launched at the Cornerstone Arts Centre

The new spring season at Cornerstone Arts Centre launched last month with some great shows, classes and workshops for everyone to enjoy, starting in January 2024. Highlights include Patti Boulay: Diana and Me, The Great Big Dinosaur Show and comedian Jo Caulfield with her show Here Comes Trouble! Plus, new for 2024 you can see National Theatre Live productions on the big screen with Skylight, Dear England and Vanya available to book now. More details can be found on **the Cornerstone website**.

And don't forget it also has a lovely licensed café serving probably the best coffee in Didcot and delicious locally-produced and freshly made food!

And finally....Bad weather and waste collections

If bad weather affects waste collections this winter, here's what will happen:

If we don't manage to empty somebody's bins on the scheduled collection day, please leave them out for two more days and we'll do our best to come back and catch up.

If, after three days, we haven't managed to empty them, please bring them back in and we'll empty them next time they're due – if this happens, you'll be able to leave extra waste out beside your bin in a suitable container.

We'll keep people up to date with the disruptions on our websites, social media, and through the local press and media. Please call the Biffa call centre on 03000 610 610 if there are any queries.

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