

Long Wittenham Parish Council meeting held on 18th April 2024

Present: Chairman Steve Brown, Cllr Steve Bolton, Cllr David Corney, Cllr Peter Rose, Cllr Mark Thompson, Cllr Liz Yuille.

In attendance: Martin Elliff (clerk).

The chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2024/060 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Ian Burton, RFO Clifford Bosley, District Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye, County Cllr Pete Sudbury.

2024/061 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- The organiser of the Fun Run, Prew Bowtell, had requested by email that the council purchase 20 large Hi-viz jackets for the marshalls for the event. Estimated cost £36 (excl VAT). Agreed.

Actions: Clerk to purchase Hi-viz jackets for the Fun Run.

2024/062 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

The chairman declared his interest in 8 Wessex Way.

2024/063 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Parish Council resolved to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 21st March 2024.

2024/064 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

- The new defibrillator for Sinodun Close has been installed. The unit performs a self test each day and councillors agreed to check the unit as part of the weekly playground inspections and report if errors are detected. The clerk will do the required monthly check and update "The Circuit".
- The village's FixMyStreet (FMS) SuperUser, Andy Mortimer, had helped to get the potholes on the road to Clifton Hampden fixed or scheduled to be fixed. The chairman agreed to write to Andy thanking him for his efforts.

Actions: Chairman to thank Andy Mortimer for his work as FMS SuperUser

2024/065 REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Cllr Casey-Rerhaye's report for March/April, sent by email is attached in Appendix A.

2024/066 REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR

None.

2024/067 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

P24/S1148/HH	8 Wessex Way Long Wittenham	NSV
P24/S1129/S73	Land at Lady Grove Didcot	NRR

2024/068 COMMUNITY HUB

Cllr Rose reported that the planning officer's report has been received. It grants planning permission subject to a Section 106 Agreement between the involved parties and noting 33 conditions, most of which are technical.

The solicitors for the County Council, the Diocese, Robert Weavers and Thomas Homes have been briefed to start work on the S106 Agreement. The chairman said

Long Wittenham Parish Council meeting held on 18th April 2024

that the PC's solicitor has been made aware but will wait until the draft of the S106 is available before making further input.

It was agreed to announce the approval of planning permission to the village via the website.

Actions: Cllr Rose to draft a website post about the Community Hub planning permission.

2024/069 CIL PROJECTS

● Acklings Playground

Cllr Rose reported that Jupiter had provided a much better proposal than the first. He, the chairman and Claire Michellis have agreed some changes and asked Jupiter to revise the proposal and this amended design is awaited. He has completed an application to the SODC CIL 2024-25 grant fund but there has been no decision as yet. He plans to apply to the FCC Community Foundation for its Community Action Fund.

Cllr Thompson suggested that some outdoor gym equipment might be a useful addition. Some councillors expressed doubts that it would be used. Cllr Thompson offered to do some research into predicted usage and get some quotes from outdoor gym suppliers.

● Allotments

The chairman said that he had met with interested parties about providing a water supply at the allotments next to Acklings. A location for a well was agreed; the water will be hand pumped. He already has one quote; he will seek others.

The unused plots are very overgrown with brambles. It was agreed that Jim Brown will borrow Cllr Bolton's brush cutter to clear them. It was also agreed that, depending upon the response from current and potential plot holders, a rotivator could be hired to dig over the plots. There would be a nominal charge for the work. Tanya Ellis will be asked to identify how many plot holders might be interested.

Actions: Chairman to seek additional quotes to install a well and pump.
Tanya Ellis to identify those allotment holders who would like their plots rotivated.

2024/070 LONG WITTENHAM TO CLIFTON HAMPDEN PERMISSIVE PATH

Cllr Thompson reported that a written agreement with Robin Buxton has been signed. Cllr Yuille confirmed that the council's public liability insurance covers the PC in regard to the insurance clause in the agreement. A similar agreement has been sent to Savills for the section of the path over the Gibbs land. There has been no response to date.

An application for funding the work to clear the verge from the village to the beginning of the path has been made to the County Councillor Priority Fund. Cllr Sudbury has agreed this and OCC's confirmation is awaited.

A meeting was held with Matt Archer of OCC to ensure that the plans to cut back and level the verge between the village and the start of the permissive path on Robin Buxton's land were sensible, and not likely to incur any issues for OCC, as the owner of the road verges.

Logs Unlimited are waiting for dry conditions in order to start work on the verge.

2024/071 ACKLINGS WOODLAND ADVENTURE SITE AGREEMENT

The revised agreement with the Pre-School had been circulated before the meeting. Approved.

Actions: Clerk to sign the Woodland Adventure site agreement and send to the Pre-School for their signature.

2024/072 PLANNING AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Following the concerns raised at last month's meeting about the high archaeological costs associated with planning applications, Cllr Sudbury wrote to Richard Oram, the head of archaeology for OCC, asking if there is a way of allowing small developments on existing sites to proceed on condition that they caused minimal disturbance, or indemnifying those promoting them (especially if they are non-commercial) to a maximum cost for archaeology. Mr Oram's very detailed response is attached in Appendix B. Mr Oram has since confirmed that "in general the topsoil is between 200-300mm and so if foundations can be built on a slab, which is no thicker than this, there will be no archaeological impact and we would therefore not require any archaeological work" - see the highlighted text in Appendix B.

2024/073 WESSEX WAY DIDCOT ROAD HEDGE

There was discussion as to whether the hedge along the front of the Didcot Road boundary to Wessex Way obscures the zebra crossing. It was suggested that the zebra crossing sign may be a more significant safety concern. The chairman offered to photograph the sign and send it to Jonathan Beale, the Traffic & Road Safety officer at OCC.

Actions:	Chairman to send a photograph of the zebra crossing sign to Jonathan Beale.
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2024/074 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

None.

2024/075 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS

- **Moveable Speed Signs**
Cllr Corney suggested that these might be a good idea, particularly at the Didcot Road entrance to the village. Cllr Thompson said that a sign there, advising motorists that they are approaching a 20mph zone, would be useful. The chairman said that it is unlikely that OCC will consider changes on the Didcot Road approach to the village as this will now be "calmed" by the new roundabout as part of the Community Hub development. Cllr Corney will ask the Community Speedwatch group if they are willing to operate a rota and confirm at the next meeting.
- **Village Welcome Pack**
It was agreed that the welcome pack should be replaced by a 'flyer' welcoming new residents and pointing them to the website where all the relevant village information is available and updated regularly.
- **Playground Inspections Log**
Cllr Yuille suggested that when items on the Playground Inspection Log are fixed, this is noted on the log. Agreed.
- **Power Outage - Telephones**
Cllr Thompson was concerned that if BT removes all landlines, as they say they will by the end of 2025, it will be difficult to make emergency calls in the village should there be a power outage, as mobile signals are inconsistent and wifi calling will not be available. Cllr Yuille had been in touch with the emergency planning department at OCC who said that there is no easy solution, although BT and other providers are required to provide a solution to facilitate emergency calls. It was suggested that residents should be advised that vulnerable people with landlines should contact their provider to ensure that they are provided with the means to make emergency calls.
- **Headington School Boathouse**
Cllrs Rose, Thompson, Yuille and the clerk were given a tour of the new boathouse on 23rd March. Since then, Cllr Rose has been advised that the intrusive lighting is

Long Wittenham Parish Council meeting held on 18th April 2024

being looked into, the new entrance is expected to open soon and a tree surgeon is dealing with overhanging branches. The Bursar has invited Cllrs Rose and Corney to a meeting (date TBA) to discuss village access to the facility.

Actions: Cllr Corney to discuss moveable speed signs with the Community Speedwatch group.
Cllr Rose to draft a 'Welcome to the village' flyer.
Clerk to note when problems on the Playground Inspections Log are fixed.
Cllrs Thompson and Yuille to draft a website post to advise residents of solutions to the emergency calls problem.

2024/076 MATTERS ARISING FROM CHAIRMAN

The chairman updated the council on the progress of turning Wards Field into a biodiversity offset for the Community Hub. He has given his suggested plan for the field to the biodiversity consultant who will create a management plan. The PCC are enthusiastic, but it is not clear who will manage the field. The chairman said that he will explore options.

2024/077 FINANCIAL REPORT

- 2023-24 End of Year Accounts and 2024-25 Budget.
The RFO had circulated these by email before the meeting. They were approved by the council and signed by the chairman.
- Expenditure during March

12/03/2024	OALC Inv L00186-2024-1 (Membership)	£205.75
12/03/2024	Clerk's Salary March 2024	£360.35
12/03/2024	RFO's Salary March 2024	£550.00
18/03/2024	SODC Inv 10356649 (Dog Bins)	£475.86
19/03/2024	London Hearts Inv 07651 (Sinodun Close Defib)	£750.00
19/03/2024	Community 1st Oxon Inv 659 (Membership)	£55.00
27/03/2024	Scribe Accounts Inv INV-5630 (Set-up)	£298.80
27/03/2024	Logs Unlimited Inv 230856	£1,640.40
27/03/2024	Logs Unlimited Inv 230864	£419.87
	March Expenditure Total	£4,756.03

2024/078 ANY MATTERS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

- The clerk advised the council that the Annual Parish Council Meeting will be held in May before the usual monthly meeting. He will circulate the documents to be approved before the meeting.
- Cllr Bolton suggested that, with the 20mph zone in place, the chicanes in the High Street should be removed to reduce air pollution. It was suggested that he make the case to our county councillor.
- The chairman pointed out that the current Grounds Maintenance contract with Log Unlimited expires next March and the process of tendering for a new contract should begin by July.

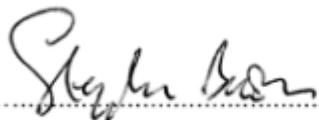
Actions: Cllr Bolton to write to Cllr Sudbury regarding the possibility of removing the chicanes in the High Street.

Meeting Closed at 9:35pm.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 16th May 2024



Signed:



Date:

16-5-24



APPENDIX A

District Councillor Report March/April 2024 Sam Casey-Rerhaye

Household Support Fund for people struggling with cost of living expenses

There are now less than four weeks left for local people who are struggling with cost-of-living pressures and the rising cost of food and energy bills **to receive vouchers through the current Household Support Fund.**

The current round of Household Support Fund closes on 31 March 2024 (or sooner if all funds are spent). Following the announcement of the temporary extension of the Household Support Fund for a further six months, the councils will shortly be considering the next round of funding. More details to follow in due course.

For more information contact our Community Hub team by calling 01235 422600 or email communityconnectors@southandvale.gov.uk

Bin Collection Schedule

2024-25 waste collection calendar is now available for residents to download, including the option to sync the calendar to your smartphone via Google Calendar & iCal. Just visit our South waste calendar page.

More investment for Didcot Wave Leisure Centre and Park Sports Centre in Wheatley

We have been successful in a bid for nearly £1.5m to invest in cleaner, greener technologies at these two leisure centres.

This will be put towards installing energy efficiency measures including solar panels and air source heat pumps to replace end of life gas-fired boilers at the council-owned leisure centres at Didcot and Wheatley.

Oxfordshire County Council – which has a joint use agreement at Parks Sports Centre – will put in the additional £1.5m to complete the required works by spring 2026.

When all the new renewable energy measures are added it will save over 200 tonnes in carbon emissions each year. This will reduce South Oxfordshire District Council's overall emissions by 6.9%.

Empty Homes

Our new Empty Homes Policy, approved by both Cabinets earlier this month, will help us to bring more empty homes back into use. You can view the policy on both the South Oxfordshire website.

Our housing team, working proactively with owners of empty homes, will use the support on offer through the policy to help homes become reoccupied. The focus will be on making homes available for those that are in most need of housing. We'll be promoting the policy and the help available to empty homeowners and residents soon. We'll also be offering residents advice on reporting any empty homes causing issues in their neighbourhoods.

Elections Staff needed

We're still looking for people to work as poll clerks and presiding officers on Thursday 2 May for the Police and Crime Commissioner Election.



Please register your interest – you could earn from £182 to £233 for the full day. All the details people need can be found on our South Oxfordshire elections jobs page

I will be sending out my annual report in the next couple of weeks.

Contact me at sam.casey-rerehaye@southoxon.gov.uk or call me on 01234 635566.

APPENDIX B

From: Oram, Richard - Oxfordshire County Council <Richard.Oram@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>

Sent: 11 April 2024 11:37

To: Cllr Pete Sudbury <Pete.Sudbury@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>

Subject: RE: Archaeology

Pete,

The simple answer is that we wouldn't be able to indemnify developers for the cost of any archaeological work undertaken to mitigate the impacts of their proposed development. Planning policy is very clear that, as the developer, this is down to them to secure. Additionally what is proposed is outside of OCCs control and so we have no influence over where such developments are undertaken or how, both of which have considerable influence over how much the costs would be. We do not undertake the work ourselves and which contracting archaeological unit they choose will also have an impact on how much it costs.

There would also be issues with simply relying on small developments to be done with minimal disturbance as this is very subjective and would be almost impossible to monitor without substantial further resources.

Archaeological remains are a finite resources, once they are damaged or removed by development they are lost forever, along with any information about how we developed. They are also very fragile and can easily be damaged by fairly modest ground disturbances. All of our advice is in line with the NPPF which does set out that an applicant should consider the impact on heritage assets, including archaeology, and that the Historic Environment Record should be consulted as a minimum. It also sets out that nationally important deposits should be preserved in situ and less significant deposits recorded in advance of their loss.

There are ways development can reduce the costs of archaeological work by programming it into the programme at an early stage so that it is dealt with efficiently. Key to this is understanding what the impact will be at an early stage. As I mentioned this is required by the NPPF. This is often overlooked however.

A lot of the costs come from how things are managed. The majority of the planning applications where we have requested planning conditions for archaeological work only required a watching brief, which consists of having an archaeologist present during the groundworks to record anything that is encountered. For most extensions and single houses this can be done in a day or two but the programme for this is normally driven by the builders and it was not unusual when I used to undertake this sort of work before joining OCC for there to be delays due to machine issues, concrete orders and builders timetables, all of which means having to pay for the archaeologist to attend over a larger time frame.

Although there may be a perception that this is putting developers off I am not sure if this is really the case. Our records show that we have requested 23 archaeological investigations in Long Wittenham since archaeology became a material consideration in planning in 1990. A quick search of the South planning website shows there have been 744 applications since 1994, the earliest date you can now search, so archaeological investigations were requested on approximately 3% of applications for the village.

Of these 23 applications where conditions were attached for archaeological investigations there are only 6 where we have no records that the required archaeological work was undertaken, which



appears to be for a variety of reasons rather than just the cost of undertaking the archaeological work required by planning policy. Some of these were refused permission and some, as I have noticed whilst looking into this, simply undertook the development without complying with the planning conditions. From what I can tell from our records there were only two applications since 1990 that were granted permission with archaeological conditions that did not then proceed with the development. Again this could be due to a number of reasons.

Looking at the specific examples you were asked about. For the sports pavilion we requested an archaeological watching brief as an archaeological evaluation undertaken 25m to the north found a considerable array of prehistoric and medieval settlement remains. The watching brief did not require any additional excavation for the archaeology and therefore the only ground disturbance was that undertaken by the builders and the archaeologist simply monitored this.

I notice from the watching brief report however that the archaeological team were onsite for 4 days, which would have increased the costs. Looking at the area that was stripped however this could have been done in a day or two which would have reduced the cost considerably. There was also an area of ground reduction of 400mm across the site but there was no mention of this within the application or the written scheme of investigation. This would have also added to the costs of the archaeological watching brief. I do not know the reasons why this pavilion required this ground reduction but **had this been built on a slab we would not have required any archaeological investigations.**

I am not sure I can agree with what the parish has said about the derelict building to the south of the village. This actually relates to two separate adjacent applications, both located in an area of considerable archaeological interest. Neither of the applications contained any assessment or description of archaeological heritage assets as required by the NPPF and neither of the applications, both prepared by professional planning consultants, **made any reference to the development being built on a slab.**

What we requested for these sites was that the application submit a heritage assessment as required by the NPPF. At no stage had we requested conditions for any work as this assessment was required to inform this as set out in the NPPF.

One of the applicants then submitted an **amendment proposing to build on a slab and we subsequently removed our recommendation for an assessment.** This application is still live. The other one has now been withdrawn. As both of these applications used a planning consultant they should have been fully aware of the requirement for this assessment under the NPPF.

These two sites are located immediately north of a Scheduled settlement site, including a Saxon Hall complex which has been suggested as a Saxon Royal site. A Saxon cemetery was excavated 160m to the west of these site in the 1850s which recorded 188 burials. The quality of the grave goods was such that this is one of the most famous Saxon cemeteries in the country and the high status nature of the grave goods would support the theory of that the Hall complex was of such high significance. The full extent of this cemetery is unknown and further high status burials related to it have recently been found on the new development west of these applications.

The high potential for burials to be encountered also adds another complication as it is a criminal offence to disturb a grave without an exhumation license issued by the Ministry of Justice. This can be very difficult to obtain without an archaeologist involved. Where burials are encountered outside of planning, or on developments with no requirement for archaeological monitoring, this usually involves the police being called and it is not unusual for them to need to maintain a 24hr presence, often for many days, whilst their Scenes of Crime Officers investigate the site. This can lead to considerable costs to the taxpayer compared to the day rate for a commercial archaeologist to undertake a watching brief for the developer.

My additional apologies for the length of this email but there was a lot to cover to provide an appropriate answer. We do always aim to be proportional and, following one of our much earlier values, aim to be fair, just and reasonable. Our advice must however be in line with the NPPF.

Long Wittenham is exceptionally rich in high status archaeological sites as a result of it long being an attractive place to live and I am always happy to have a quick meeting to provide a fuller account of this remarkable archaeological landscape or to provide a better update on what we do and how we reach such decisions.



Regards,
Richard
Richard Oram
Team Leader - Archaeology
Oxfordshire County Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' shape followed by a smaller, more complex mark.