

Long Wittenham Parish Council meeting held on 26th September 2024

Present: Cllr Steve Bolton, Cllr Ian Burton, 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 4 members of the public.

Cllr Yuille welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that she will chair PC meetings while Chairman Brown takes a sabbatical.

2024/148 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Chairman Steve Brown, County Cllr Pete Sudbury.

2024/149 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- Resident Ann Tomline had asked if consideration could be given to setting up a 'village car service' for taking residents to hospital and doctors etc. The council agreed that it is a good idea. It was suggested that a post be put on the website asking for volunteers to take it forward.

Actions: Clerk to post request for village car service volunteers on the website.

2024/150 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Cllrs Bolton and Burton declared their interest in Long Wittenham Athletic Club.

2024/151 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Parish Council resolved to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 18th July 2024.

2024/152 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

- Cllr Thompson said that the council has been added to the SSEN Resilience Fund list.

2024/153 REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Cllr Casey-Rerhaye's report for August and September, sent by email, is attached in Appendix A. She continues to chase The Grange barn. She is optimistic that staffing issues at SODC, holding this up, may soon be resolved.

2024/154 REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Cllr Sudbury reported by email:

- (1) I've been chasing down the legal Gordian knot around school, Community Hub, etc. I have enlisted the support of Cabinet colleague John Howson, Children's services. He is a very skilled operator, who remembers seeing a presentation about the school plans a couple of years back and is wearily surprised it hasn't crystallised yet. He's given me a briefing that he doesn't want shared, but there is movement. He confirms it is complicated, because of the parties involved and the unusual processes, but he's already brokered one meeting that has got through a significant chunk of the agenda. and is pushing from that.
- (2) I'm delighted that at least some of the flooding has been sorted by Matt Archer.
- (3) Paul Farmer agrees it would be fine to remove the chicanes, agrees with my suggesting we might try replacing them with some of the "soft calming" we looked at way back when we did the pilot. Realistically, we'd probably want to complete the 20mph program first (last orders have closed, so there's just the tail to get done: after Christmas I'll see if I can firm it up).



2024/155 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

P24/S2367/LDP	Sadlers Barn Long Wittenham	NSV
P24/S2711/FUL	Little House High Street Long Wittenham	NSV
P24/S2703/DIS	Land at Lady Grove Didcot	NRR
P24/S2908/DIS	Land to the North East of Didcot Didcot	NRR
P24/S2764/O	Land off Sires Hill southeast of B4106 Didcot	

- The council resolved to object to this application on 4 main grounds:
 1. It contradicts policies in the Neighbourhood Development Plan.
 2. It contradicts policies in the SODC Local Plan.
 3. There are significant archaeological features on the site.
 4. An historic landfill site has been identified within 350m of the location.

Actions: Clerk to draft response to planning application P24/S2764/O.

2024/156 COMMUNITY HUB

- Cllrs Rose and Brown had met with Thomas Homes. The S106 agreements are still in the hands of the County Council. Cllr Rose has written to our MP on several occasions but he was not able to expedite matters on our behalf. County Cllr Pete Sudbury continues to chase – see section 2024/154.

2024/157 CIL PROJECTS

- Acklings Playground

In July, tender requests were sent to three companies and the details were posted on the government's Contracts Finder website. Tenders have been received from two companies, Jupiter Play and ODS.

Grant requests have been submitted to SODC and FCC. Their decisions are awaited

- Outdoor Gym Equipment

Cllr Thompson asked the council to decide if it wants to take this forward. There was general agreement to do so, assuming that there is some assurance that the equipment will be used. A resident has expressed interest in running classes. Cllr Thompson will explore this with them in more detail. It was also suggested that residents be asked if they would use the equipment via a website post.

Actions: Cllr Thompson to draft outdoor gym post for website.

2024/158 LONG WITTENHAM TO CLIFTON HAMPDEN PERMISSIVE PATH

Cllr Thompson reported that a final signature on the written agreement for the section of the path over the Gibbs land is still awaited. Robin Buxton now wants gates at either end of his section of the path as does the Gibbs estate. Cllrs Thompson and Corney are looking into this. The levelling of the village end of the path has been completed. Two trees still need to be removed.

2024/159 HIGH STREET CHICANES REMOVAL

See Cllr Sudbury's comments in section 2024/154. If OCC cannot do it, the council needs to have some idea of the cost before committing to going ahead with this. It was suggested that the clerk seeks an estimate from ODS. Agreed. A public consultation would be required before any works take place.

Actions: Clerk to seek an estimate for the removal of the High Street chicanes.



2024/160 GRANT APPLICATION – WITTENHAM WARRIORS

The grant application had been circulated before the meeting. The council expressed concern that Wittenham Warriors is not a properly structured organisation, but accepted that it does good work within the village. £200 agreed.

2024/161 RoSPA PLAYGROUND REPORTS

Cllr Yuille had circulated her summary of this year's reports before the meeting. There are no major issues. Cllr Thompson offered to fix the minor problems at Bodkins with help.

The Clerk reported that the gate to the Woodland Adventure Site at Acklings has been repaired. It has now been padlocked, presumably by the Pre-School, so it will not be possible for councillors to carry out the weekly checks of the site. It was suggested that the Clerk advises the Pre-School that they should now carry out the weekly check themselves.

Actions: Clerk to contact the Pre-School about Woodland Adventure Site checks.

2024/162 INSURANCE RENEWAL

Cllr Yuille had circulated an email before the meeting summarising the details and quotations received from five companies. She recommended renewing with Clear Council at an annual cost of £668.07 for a 3 year Long Term Undertaking. Agreed.

2024/163 SOCIAL MEDIA

Councillors were reminded that extreme care needs to be taken when using social media sites to ensure that their views are not misinterpreted. If in any doubt, councillors are urged to check their prospective posts with colleagues before hitting the 'send' button. Agreed.

2024/164 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

- Long Wittenham Athletic Club

Cllrs Bolton and Burton reported that all non-sporting events at the club have been completed for this year. They will advise the council of upcoming events at the club to ensure that they are in accordance with the lease.

Resident Julian Gitsham had contacted the PC asking about the Play Bus parked at the club. The council is content that bus is not contravening any regulations. The club had written to Mr Gitsham offering to do what it can to ameliorate any concerns.

2024/165 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS

- Speed Alert Indicators

Cllr Corney reported that the members of the Village Speedwatch Group are keen to install Speed Alert Indicators, particularly in locations where the group is not allowed to operate. The council agreed to consider this at the October meeting when quotations have been acquired.

- Bulb Planting

Cllr Bolton reported that quotes for this had been received from Logs Unlimited (£700) and Mr Rainbow (£500). Mr Rainbow's quote was approved.

Actions: Cllr Corney to seek quotes for Speed Alert Indicators.



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2024/166 FINANCIAL REPORT

- 2023-24 Accounts
The RFO advised that the external auditor's report had been received and the 2023-24 accounts are complete with all necessary documents available on the website.
- CIL Payments
The Clerk asked the council to confirm that SODC should continue to hold the Wessex Way CIL Funds on its behalf. Confirmed.
- Scribe Accounts
The Clerk reported that the parallel run of the Scribe Accounting software with the RFO's system had revealed conflicts that could not easily be resolved. The software subscription has been cancelled.
- Income during July

01/07/2024 Brown 1 The Crescent	£5.00
July Income Total	£5.00
- Expenditure during July

02/07/2024 Logs Unlimited Inv 240108	£1,138.27
01/07/2024 Scribe Inv INV-6428 (DD)	£36.00
02/07/2024 Elliff Expenses (Website Hosting)	£28.80
15/07/2024 Clerk's Salary July 2024	£344.95
15/07/2024 Bosley Expenses (Payroll)	£203.00
18/07/2024 Brown Expenses (Fieldside 20mph Signs)	£103.81
18/07/2024 Playsafety Inv 81484 (RoSPA Inspections)	£280.80
July Expenditure Total	£2,135.63
- Expenditure during August

05/08/2024 Logs Unlimited Inv 240180	£1,879.85
05/08/2024 VHC Inv 2023-05-PC	£121.00
12/08/2024 Bolton Expenses (Playground Equipment Maintenance)	£356.75
12/08/2024 Clerk's Salary August 2024	£344.95
August Expenditure Total	£2,702.55

2024/167 ANY MATTERS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

Cllr Bolton asked that the replacement of dead trees be on the agenda for the meeting in October.

Meeting Closed at 9pm.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 17th October 2024

Signed:



Date:

17/10/24

APPENDIX A

District Councillor Report August/September 2024 - Sam Casey-Rerhaye

New NPPF consultation

The new government has launched a consultation on their new National Planning Policy Framework proposal. Our planning officers are analysing the impacts this could have on South Oxfordshire and we will be responding as a council to the consultation. The draft version the government has published would mean that our area would need to commit to build a higher number of houses than the current standard method of calculation. The consultation details are here below, and I encourage Parish Councils as well as individuals to respond.

Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

It closes on 24th September 2024.

The next steps for Councils' Joint Local Plan

South and Vale councils have now set out the next steps for their Joint Local Plan (JLP) in the light of this new government approach. The Joint Local Plan is fundamental to achieving many of the councils' strategic ambitions and as such we are now striving to submit it as soon as possible as we recognise the importance of ensuring that any development is properly planned.

We are nearly ready to submit the joint plan to be examined – anticipating it being ready to submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in December 2024, four months earlier than previously thought. We have updated a document known as the Local Development Scheme that sets out the timetable for this work, which is now available on the councils' websites: South LDS / Vale LDS.

We will be publishing the proposed Joint Local Plan that will go to this Inspectorate and the public will have a 6-week opportunity to comment on whether they think the plan meets all the current relevant requirements.

More details on this final publication stage will follow soon. I have written my opinion on the new housing targets in the draft NPPF at the bottom of this report

Local 'green skills' courses

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have partnered with Abingdon & Witney College, OxLEP (Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership) and education charity SOFEA to upskill local residents and businesses.

The councils have funded 82 places for 'green' building and construction courses from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. These courses at Abingdon and Witney College, include Installation and Maintenance of Heat Pumps, Understanding Domestic Retrofit and general awareness courses.

You can find out more about these courses and how to sign up for them at a drop-in event on **Monday 19 August at the Net Zero Skills Hub, Abingdon & Witney College**, Wootton Road, Abingdon, OX14 1GG from 9.30am to 11am.

SODC has also contributed funding to OxLEP and SOFEA's 'No Limits' programme, designed to offer support for residents into green skills training and employment. The programme includes assistance for those who need help to get a job, including free laptops and mobile phones to develop digital skills as well as travel grants for those needing financial help to get to work, school or college. A full-time member of staff will be on hand to help with any queries and offer advice.

Councillor Community Grant Scheme

The 2024/25 Councillor Community Grant Scheme opened on 14th Aug and runs until 29 November. Funds can be used to support local 'not for profit' organisations whose work benefits residents, including town and parish councils. The funding is ideal for projects which are relatively low in costs and are expected to be completed within a year. They start at £250 with a £5,000 total available for each councillor ward. For more information, please look at the Councillor Community Grant Scheme policy. For more details please ask me or email grants@southandvale.gov.uk



New social housing

After a significant amount of hard work and dedication, a major project led by our Housing team means the councils have become social landlords for the first time since 1997, and can provide genuinely affordable, high-quality homes to people in need. We're launching 45 refurbished homes ready for people living in the Vale and South Oxfordshire who need them most. A mixture of houses and flats, including new combi-boilers and double glazing to make these homes as energy efficient as possible. The homes are part of our wider work to support the councils' joint Housing Delivery Strategy. Take a look at these infographics on our web page southandvale.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/affordable-housing-South-Oxfordshire-1.mp4 that highlight some of the key achievements and plans our teams have put in place to provide affordable, sustainable homes and prevent homelessness in the districts.

Fusion Fest at Cornerstone

Last Saturday, Cornerstone Arts Centre partnered up with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champions at South and Vale to hold an event called Fusion Fest, which celebrated different international cultures in our communities. There was truly something for everyone at this wonderful and well attended event. The event included performances and workshops including Bhangra dancing, African drumming, and Chinese brush painting, and gave us the opportunity to hear from our local community on their thoughts on Equality Diversity and Inclusion

Capital Grant Scheme - closes 2 September

Voluntary and community organisations in South Oxfordshire have two more weeks to apply for funding for projects that help improve people's quality of life. The Capital Grant Scheme is open until 2 September, and organisations can apply for up to £75,000 of funding, but **no more than 50 per cent** of their total project cost.

Thank you for helping to share our social media messages, please do continue to share this information with your voluntary sector and community contacts. Application details on timings and application information are on our grants web page.

Does increasing housing targets reduce house prices and rents?

I want to emphasise that as a council administration we are very concerned with this new government's approach. This is because increasing housing targets has a poor record of delivering large numbers of housing that are sustainable and affordable. In the main it is not Councils that build houses (although we are beginning to work on that with our new Housing Strategy- see above), it is developers.

It is far too simplistic to say that the barriers to developers building houses are either house targets or the planning system. There are many sites in the county which have been allocated within a local plan, some of them with planning permission already, but which show no signs of being built anytime soon.

The main barriers to house building are firstly the lack of infrastructure: power supply, sewage treatment/water capacity, availability of doctors and dentists for example, all of which are outside of the control of local councils, and secondly market conditions which allow developers to control build rates and sell at prices they want in order to make the desired profit. If the government could address these fundamental problems, then I am sure they will find local authorities more than willing to address the housing problems they face.

But neither does solely building large numbers of houses bring prices to within affordability levels in a time period that will impact, for example, key workers working at median or lower wages. Guidance published by the government in 2018 estimated that when holding other factors like interest rates, population and incomes constant, a 1% increase in housing stock would lead to a 2% fall in house prices. These figures suggest that hitting a 1.5 million target would have a limited effect on values: an additional 1.5 million homes is equivalent to 6% of the housing stock so all things being equal prices would fall by 12%, BUT all things are not equal. Interest rates, rising incomes, population increases adding to demand all have their impacts on the housing supply/availability and affordability.



The country is already adding about 1.2 million new homes every five years so an additional 300,000 homes might skim about a further 2.5 percentage points off house prices. However, interest rates are key - a two percentage point fall in interest rates pushes house prices in the other direction by 6 percentage points.

Of course, it does not mean supply is irrelevant. A new analysis by Generation Rent - a pressure group - reckons that a 1% increase in the number of homes per person within a local authority between 2015 and 2023 is associated with a 1.2% decrease in rents as a share of average incomes. But in the decade to 2010, the housing stock in England rose by 8% but real house prices soared by 70%, as the cost of debt fell.

Over the past year house prices have fallen moderately in response to higher mortgage costs and a study by the Bank of England in 2019 using an asset price model found that about half of the 170% rise in real house prices between 1985 and 2018 can be explained by falling interest rates and the rest by rising incomes.

So it is clear that we need a much nuanced national policy for housing that takes into account these complexities. This simplistic supply-only approach will not have the desired effect but could have many undesired effects, not least on the environment, climate and nature.

Please contact me at sam.casey-rerhaye@southoxon.gov.uk or call: 01235 635566

