

## ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY PARISH COUNCIL

### CLERK'S BRIEFING NOTES

### PARISH COUNCIL MEETING ON 5 October 2023

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**Agenda Item 9**

*Correspondence*

All correspondence by email

## Aston, Cote, Shifford and Chimney Parish Council

### Agenda Item 8b – WODC Local Plan – Consultation Response Draft

The West Oxfordshire Local Plan is a crucially important document that affects the lives of all District residents, both now and for future generations. The Parish Council therefore welcomes the ongoing rounds of public consultation by WODC as they seek to review and reissue an amended Plan.

The deadline for comments in the current (second) consultation is 25 October.

In the meantime, the Council's preliminary position and intent is to focus upon Section 5, 'The Future Pattern of Development in West Oxfordshire'.

*'Of the 8 scenarios proposed under this section, the Parish Council is **against** Scenarios 5 (Dispersed Growth) and 6 (Village Clusters) as it believes this would not only encourage yet more speculative development in the Parish, but would dilute community identity, undermine local democracy and, mindful of already woefully overloaded local infrastructure, be demonstrably unsustainable, including increasing the reliance on private car usage. Informed by the public meeting held on 20 September, the Parish Council is therefore currently minded to **support** Scenario 1, the 'Hierarchical Approach', which underpins the current Local Plan 2031, perhaps blended with aspects of Scenario 7 'New Settlement' and Scenario 8 'Public Transport Focus', and will decide its final, agreed response at its next monthly meeting on 5 October.*

**Agenda Item 8c – Neighbourhood Planning**

[Neighbourhood planning - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

**What is neighbourhood planning?**

Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area. They are able to choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built, have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided, and grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead. Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to plan for the types of development to meet their community's needs and where the ambition of the neighbourhood is aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area.

**What can communities use neighbourhood planning for?**

Local communities can choose to:

- set planning policies through a neighbourhood plan that forms part of the development plan used in [determining planning applications](#).
- grant planning permission through [Neighbourhood Development Orders](#) and Community Right to Build Orders for specific development which complies with the order.

Neighbourhood planning is not a legal requirement but a right which communities in England can choose to use. Communities may decide that they could achieve the outcomes they want to see through other planning routes, such as incorporating their proposals for the neighbourhood into the [local plan](#), or through other planning mechanisms such as [Local Development Orders](#) and [supplementary planning documents](#) or through pre-application consultation on development proposals. Communities and local planning authorities should discuss the different choices communities have to achieving their ambitions for their neighbourhood.

**What are the benefits to a community of developing a neighbourhood plan or Order?**

Neighbourhood planning enables communities to play a much stronger role in shaping the areas in which they live and work and in supporting new development proposals. This is because unlike the parish, village or town plans that communities may have prepared, a neighbourhood plan forms part of the development plan and sits alongside the [local plan](#) prepared by the local planning authority. Decisions on planning applications will be made using both the local plan and the neighbourhood plan, and any other material considerations.

Neighbourhood planning provides the opportunity for communities to set out a positive vision for how they want their community to develop over the next 10, 15, 20 years in ways that meet

## **Aston, Cote, Shifford and Chimney Parish Council**

identified local need and make sense for local people. They can put in place planning policies that will help deliver that vision or grant planning permission for the development they want to see.

To help deliver their vision communities that take a proactive approach by drawing up a [neighbourhood plan or Order](#) and secure the consent of local people in a referendum, will benefit from 25% of the revenues from the Community Infrastructure Levy arising from the development that takes place in their area, where their authority collects contributions using this method.

Communities without a parish or town council can still benefit from this incentive. If there is no parish or town council the charging authority will retain the Levy receipts (where it is charged) but should engage with the communities where development has taken place and agree with them how best to spend the neighbourhood funding. Charging authorities should set out clearly and transparently their approach to engaging with neighbourhoods using their regular communication tools e.g., website, newsletters, etc. The use of neighbourhood funds should therefore match priorities expressed by local communities, including priorities set out formally in neighbourhood plans.

### **Does a neighbourhood plan have the same legal status as the local plan?**

A neighbourhood plan attains the same legal status as a local plan (and other documents that form part of the statutory development plan) once it has been approved at a referendum. At this point it comes into force as part of the statutory development plan. Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise (see [section 38\(6\) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#)).

The current neighbourhood plans for WODC can be found at [Made neighbourhood plans - West Oxfordshire District Council \(westoxon.gov.uk\)](#).

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**Aston, Cote, Shifford and Chimney Parish Council**

**Agenda Item 11a – St James Church Grass Cutting Grant Request**

***St James' Community Church Council***

On behalf of St James Church, Aston, Oxfordshire.

Mrs Elaine Anstey  
Clerk to the Aston, Cote, Shifford & Chimney Parish Council  
Foxwood  
Aston  
Bampton  
Oxfordshire

20th September 2023

Dear Mrs Anstey

**Re: St James' Church – Grant for the Maintenance of the Churchyard - 2022**

I am writing to you in regard to the maintenance of the churchyard of St James' in Aston, and to ask whether the grant, which the Parish Council has very kindly made available in the past, will be available for the costs which were incurred during 2022.

As with previous years we continue to suffer from higher running costs. This has resulted in there being a fine balancing act between our income and expenditure.

We have continued with our contractor, and he is providing us with an excellent and reliable service, charging a pay per cut fee. During 2022 we spent £570 (see accounts page 2)

With this figure in mind I would like to ask if the Parish Council would continue with a grant. Last year's grant was £704.

I am sure you will agree that keeping the graveyard tidy has an important role in the overall appearance of the Village and is important to those who have relatives buried in the graveyard.

I have included a copy of our accounts and highlighted our expenditure on the churchyard for 2022 and hope that the Parish Council will be able to continue its support for which we are very grateful.

Yours sincerely

Diana Bower  
Honorary Treasurer

Please address all correspondence to :  
3 Wheelwright Road, Aston Oxfordshire. Tel: 01993 851144  
Email [diana.bower@btinternet.com](mailto:diana.bower@btinternet.com)

Clerk's Briefing Notes – 5 October 2023  
**Aston, Cote, Shifford and Chimney Parish Council**

**ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR ST JAMES' CHURCH, ASTON - 2022**

	2021		2022	
	£	£	£	£
<b>INCOME</b>				
Collections	£1,262.02		£2,672.97	
Direct Debits	£7,348.00		£8,046.00	
Donations	£1,576.24		£562.12	
Funerals, Headstones,				
Ashes & Christenings	£1,187.00		£1,433.00	
HMRC Gift Aid	£2,384.62		£2,277.22	
Easter	£431.50			
Southern Electric	£750.00		£700.00	
Grass Grant	£616.00			
Trf from Bell Fund	£78.00			
Bin Rebate	£30.00		£151.00	
OHCT Ride			£2,000.00	
Sale of Mini Bus				£17,842.31
<b>TOTAL</b>		<u>£15,663.38</u>		
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>				
Childrens Society	£88.00		£35.00	
Parish Share	£7,971.00		£8,556.00	
Insurance	£2,342.70		£2,424.65	
Southern Electric	£840.00		£840.00	
Sundry	£185.78		£624.74	
Bells	£78.00			
Organist	£218.00			
Bin	£65.00		£570.00	
Grass	£704.00		£67.93	
Fire Extinguishers	£235.75			
ODBF	£287.00		£215.82	
School Bibles	£179.85		£82.89	
CLLI	£79.66		£12.00	
Transfer Bell Fund			£500.00	
Transfer Amenity Fund			£87.50	
Bank Charges			£236.50	
Contact Magazine			£1,241.11	
Maintenance		<u>£13,274.74</u>		<u>£15,494.14</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>				
		<u><u>£2,388.64</u></u>		<u><u>£2,348.17</u></u>
<b>Surplus</b>				
<b>BANK ACCOUNTS</b>				
Current Account	£7,179.29		£9,527.46	
Bell Fund	£2,202.35		£2,218.86	
Amenity Fund	£1,157.40		£1,659.39	

Bureau

Clerk's Briefing Notes – 5 October 2023  
**Aston, Cote, Shifford and Chimney Parish Council**

**Agenda Item 15a**

***Financial Matters***

**Cash Balances**

£

***UNITY TRUST CURRENT ACCOUNT***

Balance at 31 August 2023	<b>33,093.23</b>
Payments September	( )
Receipts September	
<b>Balance at 30 September 2023</b>	<b><u>£33,093.23</u></b>

***CCLA INVESTMENT ACCOUNT***

Balance at 31 July 2023	<b>50,357.20</b>
Transactions in month of August	208.46
<b>Balance at 31 August 2023</b>	<b><u>50,357.20</u></b>

<b>TOTAL CASH HOLDING AT 30 September 2023</b>	<b><u>£83,450.43</u></b>
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Clerk's Briefing Notes – 5 October 2023  
**Aston, Cote, Shifford and Chimney Parish Council**

2023-24		AS AT		
BUDGET	EXPENDITURE	30/09/2023	Performance Against Budget	%
£	<b>Staff Costs</b>			
£ 4,872.86	Clerk's Salary - includes potential 3% payrise if PC resolves to follow the NALC/JPAG guidance.	£ 2,341.01	£ 2,531.85	48%
£ 1,218.27	HMRC	£ 585.20	£ 633.07	48%
£ 312.00	Working from home allowance. Currently being £18 per month = £216. Maximum that can be claimed is £312. For discussion and resolution if PC wish to update.	£ 108.00	£ 204.00	35%
£ 500.00	Clerk sickness/Overtime contingency	£ -	£ 500.00	0%
£ 742.87	Travel and Training (Review for Clerk and Councillor training - industry standard 2.5% budget (£742.87))	£ 30.00	£ 712.87	4%
	<b>Office and General Expenses</b>			
£ 100.00	APM and meeting Hall Hire	£ 14.32	£ 85.68	14%
£ 190.00	Website Costs including domain registration and renewal	£ 30.93	£ 159.07	16%
£ 200.00	External Audit	£ -	£ 200.00	0%
£ 369.00	Insurance	£ 434.66	-£ 65.66	118%
£ 72.00	Bank Charges	£ 18.00	£ 54.00	25%
£ 650.00	Office running costs	£ 704.32	-£ 54.32	108%
£ 150.00	Office Equipment (transfer to reserve if unspent at year end	£ -	£ 150.00	0%
£ 1,000.00	Professional Fees	£ -	£ 1,000.00	0%
£ 35.00	ICO Fee (DD)	£ -	£ 35.00	0%
£ 515.00	Subscriptions (CPRE, CFO, SLCC, OALC)	£ 469.77	£ 45.23	91%
£ 80.00	Election Expenses (estimated until WODC issue tax base)	£ -	£ 80.00	0%
	<b>General and Ground Maintenance</b>			
£ 5,000.00	Grass Cutting - verges & weed killing	£ 2,266.04	£ 2,733.96	45%
£ 1,500.00	Grass Cutting - playing field and WM	£ 1,481.45	£ 18.55	99%
£ 2,171.00	Dog & Litter Bin Emptying	£ 760.52	£ 1,410.48	35%
£ 229.00	Clock Maintenance	£ 150.00	£ 79.00	66%
£ 600.00	Bus Shelter Cleaning	£ 210.00	£ 390.00	35%
£ 200.00	Defibrillator pads/batteries	£ 165.00	£ 35.00	83%
£ 1,500.00	Village maintenance	£ 55.00	£ 1,445.00	4%
	<b>GRANTS</b>			
£ 1,115.00	Small Grants	£ 500.00	£ 615.00	45%
£ 5,435.00	General Grants	£ 1,100.00	£ 4,335.00	20%
£ 2,551.00	<b>VAT Paid</b>	£ 4,638.36	-£ 2,087.36	182%
<b>£ 31,308.00</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£16,062.58</b>	<b>£ 15,245.42</b>	<b>51%</b>
	<b>INCOME</b>			
£ 30,166.00	Precept	£30,166.00	£ -	100%
£ 1,049.00	OCC Grass cutting Grant	£ 1,048.60	£ 0.40	100%
£ 350.00	Interest on CCLA Investment account	£ 921.57	-£ 571.57	263%
£ 2,551.00	VAT reclaimed	£ 4,286.21	-£ 1,735.21	168%
£ -	TERRA Planning Appeal	£12,379.00	-£ 12,379.00	
<b>£ 34,116.00</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£48,801.38</b>	<b>-£ 14,685.38</b>	<b>143%</b>
	<b>RESERVED FUNDS</b>			
£ 5,000.00	General Contingency fund (For example: 3 months running costs/insurance excess)	£ -	£ 5,000.00	0%
£ 1,122.54	Working Day to Day Balance	£ -	£ 1,122.54	0%
£ 9,679.00	Traffic Calming	£ -	£ 9,679.00	0%
£ -	Cote Noticeboard	£ -	£ -	
£ 5,000.00	TERRA Planning Appeal	£19,114.20	-£ 14,114.20	382%
£ 3,500.00	Aston History Boards (£1,000 per board)	£ -	£ 3,500.00	0%
£ 3,800.00	North Farm	£ -	£ 3,800.00	0%
£ 1,000.00	Office Equipment (Colour Printer/Laptop replacement 2024)	£ -	£ 1,000.00	0%
£ 3,145.00	Defibrillator Maintenance	£ -	£ 3,145.00	0%
£ 33,476.00	Recreation Reserve	£ -	£ 33,476.00	0%
£ 2,000.00	War Memorial	£ -	£ 2,000.00	0%
£ 10,000.00	Community Trust (50% match funding pot)	£ -	£ 10,000.00	0%
£ 5,000.00	Coronation (St James Church Tower Gate/Celebrations/Footpath)	£ -	£ 5,000.00	0%
<b>£ 82,722.54</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£19,114.20</b>	<b>£ 63,608.34</b>	<b>23%</b>

Clerk's Briefing Notes – 5 October 2023  
**Aston, Cote, Shifford and Chimney Parish Council**

**Agenda Item 15d – External Auditor Report**

**Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2022/23**

In respect of

**Aston, Cote, Shifford and Chimney Parish Council**

**1 Respective responsibilities of the body and the auditor**

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**; it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it does not provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>.

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2023; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors

**2 External auditor report 2022/23**

On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with the *Proper Practices* and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

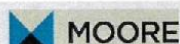
Section 2 of the AGAR was initially submitted without the Trust Fund disclosure in Box 11a completed. This was later resubmitted with a 'No' answer which was in line with our expectations and so there are no further concerns in this area.

The AGAR Section 2 Statement of Accounts does not arithmetically add down to Box 7 by £1 when summed. When rounding the numbers for the Return care should be taken to ensure the Return sums correctly.

**3 External auditor certificate 2022/23**

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2023.

External Auditor Name



External Auditor Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Moore'.

Date

08/09/2023