

**MINUTES OF ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON  
Thursday 2 November 2023 at the Village Hall, Aston, at 7.30pm**

**Members** P Sparrowhawk (Meeting Chair)

**Present:** J Ordish  
G Ball  
R Anstee  
B Lings

**In Attendance:** Elaine Anstee – Clerk  
7 members of the public  
Cllr Lysette Nicholls (WODC)

1. It was RESOLVED as proposed by B Lings, seconded by J Ordish, with all in agreement that P Sparrowhawk chair the meeting in the absence of the Chair.
2. **Apologies from Members:** There were apologies from R La Forte and A Chapman.
3. **Minutes of the previous meeting** of the Parish Council on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023 were agreed it was RESOLVED as proposed by J Ordish, seconded by R Anstee, with all in agreement, that the Meeting Chair signs them.
4. **Parish Councillors - Disclosure of interests on agenda items** – R Anstee declared an interest in agenda item 20.
5. **Meeting Open for Public Participation** – Concerns were raised about the condition of the bridge over the Great Brook as the Great Brook Road is currently flooded and this bridge is the only other access to and from Chimney. The bridge was first reported on Fix My Street two years ago and there had been assurances that it was due to be repaired/maintained. Cllr L Nicholls reported that Cllr D Levy, OCC, had already spoken to officers and would be following up with them.
6. **WODC/OCC Matters**

OCC Councillor D Levy emailed his report (Appendix 1).

WODC Councillor L Nicholls expressed her thanks for the support for the Local Plan 2041 Consultation. The 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023 is WODC Waterways Day and there will be an event at the Corn Exchange in Witney, from 10am to 6pm. It is always popular and if anyone wishes to attend they need to book on Eventbrite ([West Oxfordshire Waterways Day 2023 Tickets, Thu 23 Nov 2023 at 09:30 | Eventbrite](#)).

## 7. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

a) *Deferred to next meeting as no update/progress.*

- *Neighbourhood Plan*
- *Electronic Speed Signs*
- *Cote Chapel*
- *War Memorial Reinstatement Valuation*
- *Gate at St James Church – Coronation Commemoration*
- *Traffic calming update and other traffic issues* – following the incident on North Street during the weekend of 28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> October OCC have suggested putting an 'build out' in. Clerk to contact OCC officers and set up a site visit to look at this and other build up sites.

b) *Footpaths/Treescapes*

No update.

c) *Anti-Social Behaviour*

One of the benches in St James Churchyard has been damaged and following the mud on road issue, WODC Cllr C Maynard has spoken with the farmer concerned.

## 8. Planning

### New planning applications - None

### Update on Ongoing Planning Applications – For Information

- a) **Terra** – The Chair and Cllr C Maynard will be attending a meeting on 20 Nov at WODC with the Council Leader, Head of Planning, and others, to discuss our concerns regarding WODC's handling of the Terra Appeal.
- b) **North Farm** – Still under discussion with OCC and WODC.
- c) **Hawthorns** – Concrete plinth broken up in early September and site now clear. There were concerns raised on how the area would be maintained as there is no access. The grounds maintenance will be managed by the resident's association.
- d) **Marsh Furlong**. Marsh Furlong - Kathryn Jackson now chairs the Marsh Furlong Residents Association. The issue of parking on Saturday mornings (football, ballet etc) has arisen again. You will have seen the email exchange on the subject. In sum, this is a known issue that the Community Trust continue to grapple with. CT planning is ongoing to provide an element of overflow parking on the recreation field.
- e) **Children's Home** – completion on target for end of October 2023.
- f) **St Joseph's Court** – Surface water and drainage. Thames Water have contacted the LPA (Aug 23) and no further update.

## Update on Previous Planning Applications

<b>Reference</b>	<b>23/01820/RES</b>
Alternative Reference	PP-12287119
Application Validated	Fri 21 Jul 2023
Address	Land Parcel to The North of Aston North Street Aston
Proposal	Reserved matters for the erection of an agricultural workers dwelling.
Status	Decided
Decision	Approve
Decision Issued Date	Fri 06 Oct 2023

## 9. New Business

### a) *Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal – Parish Council donation*

It was RESOLVED as proposed by J Ordish, seconded by B Lings, with all in agreement, to donate £150, as set in the budget, for the purchase of a wreath. Clerk to write to T Jackson and thank for organising this.

### b) *Remembrance Sunday service at Aston War Memorial (Sunday 12th November – 2.45pm at War Memorial for a short, spoken service led by the Vicar of St James Church)*

The chair will attend and lay the wreath on behalf of the Parish Council.

### c) *Christmas Tree*

It was RESOLVED as proposed by J Ordish, seconded by R Anstee, with all in agreement, to purchase a Christmas Tree for the parish to be sited outside the Red Lion in Aston.

It was RESOLVED as proposed by B Lings, seconded by R Anstee, with all in agreement, that a budget of £150 be set to come from the Maintenance Budget.

### d) *Parish Council Meetings and Annual Parish Meeting for 2024.*

i) It was decided that the following Thursdays at 7.30pm for monthly PC meeting in 2024:

4th January

1<sup>st</sup> February

7th March

4th April

2nd May - APCM

13th June

4th July

1st August

5th September

3rd October

7th November

5th December

13<sup>th</sup> June for June meeting

ii) The Annual Parish meeting for 2024 will be on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April.

## **10. Governance – Policies for Review – None this month**

## **11. Community Trust**

### *a) Hire of Ordish Room/Village Hall for Parish Council and Parish meetings.*

It was RESOLVED as proposed by J Ordish, seconded by R Anstee, with all in agreement, that the Parish Council would pay for use of the Ordish Room and Village Hall for monthly meetings with immediate effect.

### *b) Other matters:*

- Car parking issue has been raised again for when the football club are training, holding matches.
- P Sparrowhawk has been asked to quote a price for extending the car park.
- There has been some progress on the MUGA with work on the bat survey now underway. Discussions are now focusing upon solutions rather than problems. There may now be a sensible way ahead on this matter that will enable the resubmission of the planning application.

## **12. Parish Infrastructure**

### *a) Village maintenance*

Budget remaining for 2023/24 is £1,445.

Road signs as in names of roads with asset check do as a survey

### *b) Asset Check*

J Ordish volunteered to do the physical Asset Check with the clerk doing the defibrillators. Whilst doing this J Ordish will do a survey of the road/street names as several are very worn/tired.

### *c) Crocuses*

It was RESOLVED as proposed by P Sparrowhawk, seconded by B Lings, with all in agreement, to set a budget of £500 for the purchase of up to 2000 crocus bulbs.

J Ordish to ask D Johnson about sourcing and planting.

Potential areas identified for planting these:

End of Foxwood on Cote Road

Around noticeboards at end of Bull Street and Southlands

Bend opposite entrance to Laundry Lane

Jubilee seat

Wood Bridge on right hand side

Cote by seat

By noticeboard in Cote

Grassed area around war memorial

- d) There have been requests from residents for a bench on the grassed area at the end of Foxwood where the bus stops, opposite the bus stop at the end of Saxel Close.  
Clerk to check with OCC who own the land and source a quote for a recycled, brown plastic bench.

### 13. FINANCE

a) *Account balances – noted.*

b) *Review of the Year-to-Date Financial Report – noted.*

c) *Bank Reconciliation – 30 September 2023*

It was RESOLVED as proposed by J Ordish, seconded by B Lings, with all in agreement to agree the bank reconciliation as presented.

d) *Draft Budget 2024-25*

The draft budget for 2024-25 was discussed in detail. There was agreement to aim to keep the precept the same as 2023-24 at £30,166. Amendments to the budget included:

- £1000 – Bench at end Foxwood – reconstituted plastic/brown same as Southlands.
- Correct the reserved funds for the History Boards to £4,500.
- Under grants increase Voices to £1,500, Community Trust (playground inspections/maintenance) £1,000, British Legion to £200 and Volunteer Link Up to £150 – RESOLVED as proposed by R Anstee, seconded by R Anstee with all in agreement.
- 5.2 Clerk to draft a strategy for discussion and resolution.

e) *Scribe – Purchase of Annual Subscription*

The proposal was discussed in detail with councillor's requesting more information on the potential for a trial period and if the Parish Council pays monthly what will it cost.

f) *Microsoft Office – Price Increase*

With effect from 2 November 2023 the price of the Microsoft 365 Business Standard licence (clerk) will go up from £9.40 to £10.30 per month.

- g) It was **RESOLVED** to approve the following payments for the period October 23 as proposed by J Ordish, seconded by R Anstee, with all in agreement.

	NET	VAT	Gross Amount
Clerk's expenses 230 x 7p/Microsoft £49.08	57.00	8.18	65.18
D Johnson – Grass cutting and WM Maintenance/Bus shelter cleaning – Invoice 2424	445.00		445.00
WODC –Grounds Maintenance Inv 33547798	369.01	73.80	442.81
Royal British Legion – Remembrance Wreath (Cheque)	150.00		150.00
<b>Total to be decided and approved</b>	<b>£1,021.01</b>	<b>£81.98</b>	<b>£1,102.99</b>
<b>Total of already paid</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>
<b>Monthly Standing Orders/DDs</b>			
Clerk's Salary including WFH Allowance	412.41		412.41
HMRC PAYE	98.40		98.40
<b>Total SDOs</b>	<b>£510.81</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£510.81</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,531.82</b>	<b>£81.98</b>	<b>£1,613.80</b>

#### 14. CONFIDENTIAL – Recruitment of RFO

The advert for RFO recruitment has been sent to Voices and placed on website/noticeboards. Closing date 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 12 noon. Review of applications/shortlisting by end of 27<sup>th</sup> November with interviews between 30<sup>th</sup> November and 6<sup>th</sup> December.

#### 15. Confidential – Clerk's Pay Review, Hours and Appraisal

- a) It was **RESOLVED** as proposed by J Ordish, seconded by G Ball, with all in agreement, to increase the working from home allowance for the clerk to £26 per month for 24-25 and budget for the same for the RFO.
- b) It was **RESOLVED** as proposed by G Ball, seconded by J Ordish, with all in agreement to:
  - Agree to budget for the pay award for 23-24 to be back dated to April 23, to pay this as a lump sum once confirmed by NJC.
  - The 24-25 annual inflationary pay review to be budgeted in line with NALC/NJC pay award when issued.
  - That the clerk will stay on their existing contracted hours until 31 March 2024 to clear additional hours worked in 23-24 and allow for training the new RFO.
  - Set the clerk's appraisal for 23-24 for the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.

#### 16. Parish Councillors' reports from meetings attended since last meeting.

Clerk – attendance at SLCC National Conference (11 and 12th October but hours not attributed to PC), Local Plan consultation evening at WODC (3/4 of an hour) and Town and Parish Council Charter meeting at OCC (2.5 hours).

- 17. Matters arising since publication of agenda/  
Matters which Councillors may wish to raise for inclusion on next agenda.  
(For discussion only)**  
Lane sharing and charging for Dec agenda.

- 18. Date of next meeting:** Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023, 7.30pm  
the monthly meeting of Parish Council

Meeting closed at 21.21pm.

Signed.....Dated.....

## Appendix A

### County Councillor Report, 5 October 2023

Dan Levy

Please find a report on areas covered by the County Council which may be of interest. Much of my time is taken up with preparing and developing the budget that will be discussed (and I hope approved) at the County Council meeting in February. There are intense pressures on the finances of all local authorities. Funding from central government has been cut in real terms each year for the past decade, and permitted rises in council tax are lower than inflation. There are additional pressures from demographic changes, with many more older people, and with increase in demands on children's service particularly in areas like support for young people with special educational needs. The rise in the national living wage is welcome, but has an added impact for our services. There will be an iterative process in which proposals will be scrutinised, the public will be consulted, and we will discover in the autumn statement later this month and the annual "settlement" announced in late December what money will be available.

**Roads** The Aston to Ducklington road has been repaired, with the edges replaced and strengthened. This was achieved in the timescale advertised in advance. Thank you for your patience while the work was done. I wish we could repair more roads in such a thorough way, but as the cost was around £900,000, you may be able to see why this isn't possible. Can I give advance notice that there is a planned closure of the road between Standlake and Stanton Harcourt/Northmoor between 6th and 8th December between 9-30 and 3-30 each day. This is for bridge work.

**Reducing disruption caused by utilities & developers:** The County's new plan for charging an increased daily fee of £2500 (instead of the £300 fixed fee) to utility companies that dig up major roads is being consulted on. By law it is restricted to 5% of Oxfordshire's roads and so will focus on busy, critical parts of the network. Surplus funds will be reinvested. The DfT is encouraging all councils to adopt schemes like this. Many of the roadworks in the county are instigated by utilities companies, and we want them to be completed quickly.

**Climate change** Oxfordshire tops table for county councils tackling climate change: Oxfordshire was rated the best performing county council in the UK on climate change by the Climate Emergency UK climate action scorecard. That is absolutely not a reason for complacency.

**Property** The Back Lane children's home is nearing completion. It is part of the process of ensuring that we can look after children within the county. North Farm remains the subject of discussions between WODC and the County Council. My understanding is that we should expect developments over the next few months. I am keen that we move more quickly, and end up with a development which meets the requirements of the village, removes an eyesore, and provides needed housing.

**Schools** Although we are only just after half term in the autumn of 23, applications are now open for new primary school pupils for September 24. Applications should be done online. [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/primaryadmissions](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/primaryadmissions) If anyone moves to the area during the year, there are In-year placements – one for the things that gave most joy recently was helping the parents of a young person who had just moved to the UK to get their child into their local school within a few weeks of arrival.

As ever, please contact me with queries, comments or requests.

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