

**MINUTES OF ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON  
Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2024 at the Village Hall, Aston, at 7.30pm**

**Members** J Ordish (Meeting Chair)

**Present:** R Anstee  
G Ball  
D Outen  
P Sparrowhawk  
B Lings

**In Attendance:** Elaine Anstee – Clerk  
2 members of the public  
Cllr and MP C Maynard (WODC)  
Cllr D Levy (OCC)  
Cllr S Cozier (WODC)

- 1. Apologies from Members:** There were apologies from R La Forte.
- 2. Parish Councillors - Disclosure of interests on agenda items** –P Sparrowhawk declared a nonpecuniary interest in Agenda Item 10 as he is a committee member.
- 3. Minutes of the previous meetings** of the Parish Council on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024 were agreed and it was RESOLVED as proposed by R Anstee, seconded by P Sparrowhawk, with all in agreement, that the meeting Chair signs them.
- 4. Meeting Open for Public Participation** – No issues raised under this item.

**5. WODC/OCC Matters**

Cllr D Levy (OCC) – report attached at Appendix C. Sale of North Farm farmhouse has been signed off with the proviso that the remaining land and planning permission for the wider site is resolved.

Cllr C Maynard MP (WODC) – see attached report at Appendix B. He confirmed he will follow up on the Grampian conditions for Brier Furlong. He also advised that the Local Plan process has stopped and been pushed back to December 2026 to allow for the National Planning Framework review the government.

Cllr S Crozier (WODC) – report at Appendix A. He will follow up on issues with the breaches of the construction management plan for Brier Furlong that are still impacting residents of Marsh Furlong. He advised that WODC will be employing an enforcement officer who will go out to sites and the recruitment is in progress.

P Sparrowhawk asked about evening buses and cost of taxis, if you can find one in Witney. Cllr C Maynard will investigate and get the numbers of registered taxis.

P Sparrowhawk queried where the cost of the Harris Fencing at the Park and Ride at Eynsham was being born. Cllr D Levey (OCC) confirmed that the project is on a fixed price and the fencing is included in the price, so the contractor is paying.

P Sparrowhawk raised the ongoing frustrations that road repairs and resurfacing work ignore adjacent damage and potholes. Surely this is not cost effective to have a team out and not just do anything that is obvious in the immediate area. Cllr D Levy (OCC)

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confirmed that the county contractors are only allowed to do what is on the work sheet and when asked who checks the work for county confirmed that this was the responsibilities of the contractor.

## 6. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

### a) Quick updates:

- *Electronic Speed Signs* – Locations to be confirmed with OCC on the 16<sup>th</sup> October following meeting with OCC Highways.
- *Cote Chapel* – no news.
- *Gate at St James Church* – Quote from ‘The Gentleman Blacksmith’ for discussion. Previously circulated by email with agenda. – J Ordish will go back and see if we can have a simpler design for less.
- *Footpaths/Treescapes*
- *Thames Water* – chased again for results of flood monitors on 21<sup>st</sup> September. Thames Water officer has responded, and the Parish Council should have the results by 4<sup>th</sup> October. For future agendas add back in St James Court as the Thames Water work has been suspended.
- *Traffic Calming* – deferred until VAS (see first point) installed and effects analysed.
- *Great Brook Bridge* – metal defences put up but no news on repairs. The bridge issues were first reported in 2015.
- *North Street* – to be discussed with OCC on 16<sup>th</sup> October.
- *Beedles Turn* - to be discussed with OCC on 16<sup>th</sup> October.

### b) Neighbourhood Plan

No update.

### c) Data Logger and Flood Grant - OCC

These have now been installed with thanks the residents who have supported and made this possible, in particular C and J Smith. It was RESOLVED as proposed by P Sparrowhawk, seconded by R Anstee, with all in agreement to purchased £200 Marks and Spencer vouchers as thanks for the work done to install the data loggers. D Outen will be working on how to create reports to bring to the Parish Council and share with residents and other agencies.

### d) Defibrillators

- Brier Furlong – Living Space/Stonewater will fund the purchase of and installation of a defibrillator, at the Aston Pottery with the agreement of the owner. No date agreed yet.
- Defibrillator box for Aston and Cote School was agreed at the August meeting and the clerk has contacted the school for details on siting and power requirements and requested again on the 21<sup>st</sup> September. G Ball will speak to the head teacher to encourage a response.
- Replacement of defibrillator at the Aston Depot. It was RESOLVED as proposed by P Sparrowhawk, seconded by J Ordish, with all in agreement, to purchase a replacement defibrillator, ZOLL AED fully automatic, from the British Heart Foundation for £990 plus VAT.

e) *History Board Update*

No update.

f) *Anti-Social Behaviour*

Mud on the road through Cote has been deposited by local farm vehicles and there has been not apparent attempt to clear up, again.

## 7. PLANNING

### New planning applications - None

#### Update on Ongoing Planning Applications – For Information

- a) Brier Furlong – no update.
- b) Marsh Furlong – agenda item 6 under Thames Water.
- c) St Joseph’s Court –agenda item 6 under Thames Water.
- d) North Farm – see Cllr D Levy (OCC) under minute number5, page XXXX, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2024.
- e) Potential new development – Lone Star Land (land agents) – planning application not submitted as of date of meeting.

#### Update on Previous Planning Applications – None

## 8. New Business

a) *Asset Review.*

J Ordish agreed to carry out the half yearly inspection of the external fixed assets.

b) *Budget 2025-2026 – Projects*

Councillors were asked to think about potential projects for the November meeting for 2025-26 so that they can be included in the budget.

c) *External Auditor Report and Certificate for 2023/24*

It was RESOLVED, as proposed by P Sparrowhawk, seconded by R Anstee, with all in agreement to agree the External Audit, note the comments and pay the invoice for £315 from Moore Ltd.

d) *Christmas Tree*

It was RESOLVED, as proposed by P Sparrowhawk, seconded by R Anstee, with all in agreement to purchase a Christmas Tree for the parish, to be sited outside the Red Lion, The Square, Aston, at a maximum cost of £150 from the General Maintenance budget.

e) *Notice of Review of Polling Districts and Places – WODC*

For information - WODC are consulting on the review of the Polling District and Polling Places. The village hall in Aston is not part of the current review of polling places and on the review is identified as ‘accessible – no proposed change’.

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f) *Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal – Parish Council donation*

It was RESOLVED, as proposed by P Sparrowhawk, seconded by R Anstee, with all in agreement to make a donation of £200 in respect of a poppy wreath from the Royal British Legion, to be laid on behalf of the parish.

g) *Remembrance Sunday service at Aston War Memorial (Sunday 10th 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

h) *Portfolio Assignments*

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

**9. Governance – Policies for Review – None**

**10. Community Trust**

P Sparrowhawk reported that the MUGA had been granted planning permission but there are ongoing discussions with the local planning authority. The playground has passed its annual ROSPA inspection. The fire alarms in the village hall are due for replacement.

**11. Parish Infrastructure**

a) *Village maintenance*

- Litter bin siting at Chimney – awaiting recommendations following OCC Highways visit on 16<sup>th</sup> October.
- It was RESOLVED as proposed by R Anstee, seconded by P Sparrowhawk, with all in agreement to buy and plant £500 of mixed spring bulbs for planting around the parish.

**12. FINANCE**

a) *Account Balances to 30 September 2024 – noted.*

b) It was RESOLVED to approve the following payments for the period October 24 as proposed by P Sparrowhawk, seconded by R Anstee, with all in agreement.

	NET	VAT	Gross Amount
OTT Hydromet – Dataloggers (OCC Grant £5k rec'd)	6,825.40	1,365.08	8,190.48
WODC – Emptying Waste Bins	1,088.10	217.62	1,305.72
WODC – Grass Cutting July 2024	740.00	148.00	888.00
Moore – External Audit Fee	315.00	63.00	378.00
E Anstee – Exp. Eukhost Domain Transfer	49.99	10.00	59.99
Clerk – Overtime	400.10		400.10
RFO - Overtime	223.40		223.40
HMRC – Tax deducted from overtime	156.20		156.20
D Johnson - Invoice	40.00		40.00
<b>Total to be decided and approved</b>	<b>£9,838.19</b>	<b>£1,803.70</b>	<b>£11,641.89</b>

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<b>Total of already approved/paid</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>
<b>Monthly Standing Orders/DDs</b>			
Freeola – Domain Charges	60.00	12.00	72.00
Clerk’s CC – Microsoft £65.88, Norton £79.99, Bank Charge £3	124.56	24.31	148.87
Clerk’s Salary including WFH Allowance	210.05		210.05
RFO Salary including WFH Allowance	185.75		185.75
HMRC PAYE	89.80		89.80
<b>Total SDOs</b>	<b>£670.16</b>	<b>£36.31</b>	<b>£706.47</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£10,508.35</b>	<b>£1,840.01</b>	<b>£12,348.36</b>

**13. Parish Councillors’ and clerk’s reports from meetings attended since last meeting.**

P Sparrowhawk – the Bampton Flood meeting was cancelled with no explanation or revised date.

**14. Matters for inclusion on next agenda**

Apologies in advance were received from B Lings, J Ordish and R Anstee.

**15. Date of next meeting:** Thursday 3<sup>1st</sup> October 2024, 7.30pm

Being the monthly meeting of Parish Council.

Meeting closed at 20.52 hrs

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

## Appendix A

WODC Cllr S Cozier report:

### **FULL COUNCIL:**

Considering the Government's resolution to end the Winter-fuel allowance, the alliance resolved to expedite a solution and quickly identify those in this district who are eligible for the Winter Fuel Allowance pension credit but do not claim it.

A motion was put to the council and subsequently passed in relation to the Government's decision to remove the Winter Fuel Allowance. The council has resolved to try and maximise the take-up of pension credit and bring forward the administration and sign up of housing benefit and pension credit to help and reassure susceptible pensioners that they will be able to afford to heat their homes in winter.

The motion reads as follows: **This Council notes the government's decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments (WFPs). Age UK estimates that the government's changes to WFPs could hit 2 million people across the country, some of whom badly need the money to stay warm this winter. This Council also notes the parlous state of the Public Finances that the new Government has inherited.**

**This Council resolves to:**

- 1. Request that the Executive considers a report from officers with proposals for promoting a District awareness campaign working with our local NHS partners, Parish Councils and charitable, civic and religious groups, to encourage elderly residents who are eligible for means- tested benefits such as Pension Credit to register and claim them to ensure that they continue to receive WFPs this Winter and to ensure that those in need are sign-posted to the continuing Household Support Fund;**
- 2. Request that the Leader of the Council writes to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging an impact assessment of the government's decision to means test WFPs and asking HM Treasury to examine transitional measures to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who are eligible for, but who do not – or cannot – claim, other benefits under current thresholds are protected from fuel poverty.**

### **NOTICE OF REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES**

West Oxfordshire District Council is conducting a review of polling district and polling places within West Oxfordshire. Written comments and representations are invited from any electors and other interested persons and bodies, including elected representatives and those with expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for disabled people.

Although the review is of polling districts and polling places it is accepted that polling stations are linked to the review and representations and comments are invited regarding those polling stations currently used. The council has asked that persons or bodies making representations should, if possible, give alternative buildings/venues that may be used as polling places. In conducting the review, the Council is requesting submissions from the (Acting) Returning Officer for the parliamentary constituency of Witney and the part of the Banbury, Bicester and Woodstock Constituencies within the West Oxfordshire District Council authority area. **The deadline for submissions is Monday 4 November 2024**

### **INFORMATION:**

**Comments and representations may be submitted as follows:**

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**By post:**

**By email: Online:**

Electoral Services, West Oxfordshire District Council, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxon OX28 1NB

[elections@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:elections@westoxon.gov.uk)

<https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/about-the-council/elections-and-voting/polling-districts-and-places/>

**FLOODING**

Following the recent rainfall many rivers remain at a high level. There are several flood alerts in place in the district. I have included a link to the areas with alerts in place:

<https://check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk/alerts-and...>

Who can help and who do you need to contact in a flood:

<https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/environment/flooding/>

WODC have supplied as list of useful telephone for residents. I have attached them to this report and a leaflet which the parish council might want to add post.

Roads, blocked gullies, gratings and drains	Oxfordshire County Council	0845 3101111 (24 hrs) Website: <a href="#">Oxfordshire County Council</a>
Main rivers	Environment Agency	General enquiries: 08708 506 506 Incident hotline: 0800 807 060 Website: <a href="#">Environment Agency</a>
Other watercourses such as a stream or ditches	Landowner	<a href="#">Contact the riparian owner</a> Call 01993 861000

Thank you

Steve

Please do get in touch with any queries, comments and, or requests. The best way is via email at: [steve.cosier@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:steve.cosier@westoxon.gov.uk) or mobile: 07584356301

## Appendix B

WODC Cllr C Maynard (MP) report:

**Winter Fuel Allowance** – my 71 Liberal Democrat MP colleagues and I all voted against Labour’s plans to cut the Winter Fuel Allowance. We believe that their plan to cut the means test back to only those who receive pension credit represents a very mean means test. West Oxfordshire District Council unanimously passed a motion last week asking the national government to reconsider and mitigate its approach. The council has been allocated £131,730 to support residents, as part of the recently launched Household Support Fund, in which Oxfordshire County Council has been allocated £3.4m.

In West Oxfordshire the funding will be available through a number of different services to make sure the right support reaches those who need it:

- Individual support through Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire who will provide emergency vouchers and financial help towards food, fuel and other essential household costs.
- Support for those in temporary accommodation and housing need through housing services.
- Support for community food projects and voluntary sector groups where they are working directly with residents in need

Please do get in touch if you have need or know others who need helping.

**Thames Water** – it’s hard to see any good news here. As I write this, both Bampton and Standlake Sewage Treatment Works are dumping sewage, with Standlake’s works at 224 hours of non-stop discharge. The new Labour government is deferring taking material action, allowing Thames Water to continue to operate despite the company being in breach of its operating licence, given it now lacks two investment grade credit ratings. The company is headed for bankruptcy, also known as Special Administration. My colleagues and I are pushing hard for a wholesale reworking of the regulations governing the water sector. I believe it is unlikely that we are going to see material improvements in our local treatment works and networks until the government properly addresses the problem. Specifically, to Aston, we are still waiting for Thames Water’s much delayed flow data from their network monitoring project. I have chased my Thames Water contact regarding this. He replied on Tuesday saying that yes, they owe us this data and he will follow up. Hmm.

**Housing and the Local Plan** – the new government has ramped house building targets, with West Oxfordshire’s slated to be increased by 62%. Given the absolutely dire state of the A40 this is a huge mistake. Our district cannot take this level of housing without greatly improved transport and social infrastructure. To date, there has been minimal information regarding this, and we will have to wait and see to learn more information. I met with the head of Strategic Planning and the Councillor responsible for Planning tomorrow to discuss this in more detail. I think they are every bit as concerned that I am that there could well be a developer free-for-all, nationwide, from the end of the year.



## **Appendix C**

### **OCC Cllr D Levy report:**

I hope everyone had a good summer, or what passed for summer this year. Please find a report from me on some of the current County Council related issues.

#### **Roads**

Oxford - You will I am sure have read that Network Rail have failed to meet the timetable they committed to as Oxford Station is rebuilt. That is, to put it mildly, extremely disappointing. Botley Road remains closed to motor vehicles at the railway bridge, and we await NR telling us the new expected opening date. In the meantime, the current bus arrangements, which work well, are continuing to be in operation.

A40 - Discussions with Homes England continue relating to the A40 improvement project. Once Homes England release the money promised, the Park and Ride junctions and bus lanes can be completed. The P&R itself is financed by a different government agency, as part of the Science Corridor project which is largely paying for the junctions at Oxford North and at Shores Green. The new government has promised a more joined-up way of funding projects, and that is to be welcomed. It is worth stressing that the P&R was built prior to the other funding being released in order to ensure that it wasn't affected by inflation, and to ensure that no Oxfordshire Council Taxpayer money has been used on the project. That includes the current maintenance costs, which are bundled into the government funding. The fundamental issue has been that the project used two unconnected pots of money, and neither government pot was inflation indexed. That is what was inherited by the current administration, and although the situation is frustrating, it is the best that could be done with what we were left. As well as quicker bus services there will be an improved bike lane, and significant improvements to the Eynsham roundabout and the lights at Cassington, and an additional bus stop for Cassington. I appreciate that people in Cassington can already use Eynsham as a park and ride if they want to get the bus via Botley and have no reason to use it for other journeys, so the new facility won't necessarily be used directly by residents.

#### **Flooding**

There has been, and continues to be, substantial flooding throughout the county following the recent weather. There was a month's rain in one day, and there was flooding in places that normally avoid it, and in places where gullies had recently been cleared. However, it clearly is important to keep gullies clear, which is the County Council's responsibility on the highway network, and for riparian landlords to keep their ditches maintained. I believe that WODC provided some sandbags although this isn't its responsibility. The Fire Service is the contact when a flood event is happening. There is much more information on the county council web pages and at Oxfordshire County Council – Flood Toolkit ([oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com](http://oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com)) The recent flooding also demonstrates why housing should be built only where it won't make matters worse.

#### **Buses**

Reliability measures - As Botley Road is one of the key routes into Oxford, the knock-on effect of the closure is that the bus improvement schemes which were due to commence have had to be postponed. It is vital that bus movement in Oxford is prioritised, along with active travel, and it is a shame that there will be a delay in being able to put the filter scheme in place. The filters will permit people to drive to anywhere that they currently can drive to but will create cleared key routes for buses.

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New capped multi-company fares - With support from the County Council, the bus companies in Oxfordshire have agreed to combined ticketing, with a maximum daily or weekly fare. The daily cap is £6.50 for adults and £3.50 for under 18s. A weekly ticket is £25.00 and £14.50. That includes local buses from more rural areas, as well as routes in the city, and between the major towns. The First and Last Bus services from Standlake to Eynsham and to Hanborough Station are included, as is the improved service between Abingdon and Witney. Find out about MyBus Oxfordshire tickets at [mybusoxfordshire.org.uk](http://mybusoxfordshire.org.uk) The government will be announcing that local authorities will be able to franchise buses services in their areas. They are unlikely to provide funding that would enable this to make a substantive difference to local services, but we will keep the situation under review.

### **Democracy**

The Electoral Commission has completed its final report on Electoral arrangements for the County Council, which Parliament will approve in time for the May 2025 elections. This has redrawn the county divisions, to reflect population movements since the last review. There will be a new Carterton South and Bampton division, which will contain Aston, Yelford and Standlake, while Northmoor and Stanton Harcourt will be part of the new Eynsham Division. This of course follows closely after the first parliamentary election under the new boundaries and will be followed by an Electoral Commission review of the district boundaries in the next year or so.

As ever, please do contact me at [dan.levy@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:dan.levy@oxfordshire.gov.uk)