

**MINUTES OF ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY PARISH COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 4TH DECEMBER 2014 IN THE
MEETING ROOM, VILLAGE HALL, ASTON AT 7.30 PM**

1. Members **Richard Haines (Chairman)**

Present: **Jane Everex**
 Ben Lings
 John Ordish
 Paul Sparrowhawk
 Phil West

In Attendance: Helen Sandhu – Clerk
 Hilary Fenton, West Oxfordshire District Councillor
 Steve Good, West Oxfordshire District Councillor
 Charles Mathew, Oxfordshire County Councillor
 Jonathan and Daniel Ede, representatives from Builders Ede (arriving at
 item 6)
 1 member of the public

Apologies: Jane West

2. Minutes of previous meeting – on 6 November 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
Proposed by Jane Everex, seconded by Phil West.

3. Parish Councillors – Disclosure of interests on agenda items

Ben Lings informed the Parish Council that he has a conflict of interest on matters relating to the planning application for the Thistle Cottage site and would not participate in the discussion or vote.

Paul Sparrowhawk and John Ordish informed the Parish Council that they have a conflict of interest on matters relating to the proposed enhancements to sports and recreation facilities from Aston & Cote Community Trust and would not participate in any vote on this matter.

4. Meeting open for public debate

A member of the public who lives in Ham Lane informed the Parish Council that she is concerned about the difficulties of exiting Ham Lane (as a driver and as a pedestrian) when there are cars parked outside Bovingtons Yard and outside the former post office.

Richard Haines observed that the public telephone box at the entrance to Ham Lane has a detrimental impact on the visual splay. The Clerk was asked to contact BT to obtain usage figures on the telephone box so that the Parish Council can consider whether it would be beneficial to suggest that it is removed.

John Ordish told the Parish Council that the builders working on the cottages near the entrance of Bull Street have informed him that they will restore the highways verge (where they are storing materials and the skip) once the work has finished.

5. OCC/WODC Items

The West Oxfordshire District Councillors informed the Parish Council that they had no specific information from the District Council to report.

OCC/WODC Items (continued)

Charles Mathew informed the Parish Council that the County Council is expecting to have a deficit of £12 million in the financial year 2014/15, despite having made cuts of £157 million over four years. The two main reasons for the deficit are a significant increase in the number of children in care and a substantial increase in the costs of providing services and support to older people. 50% of the council's funds are now spent supporting 2% of the population; this is likely to rise to over 75% during the course of the next parliament. The effect of this is that there are very few funds remaining to spend on discretionary services after the statutory obligations have been met. The County Council will be considering the budget for 2015/16 at a meeting in February 2015 – it is likely to include some very severe and difficult cuts to services.

On matters relating to gravel extraction, Mr Mathew expressed disappointment that the County Council has approved an annual gravel production target for 2015/16 of 1.015 million tonnes based on the local aggregate assessment figure, rather than using the 10 year rolling average actual production figures which would give a target of between 701,000 and 811,000 tonnes. The last actual annual production figures available are 402,000 tonnes.

A revised draft of the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy will be considered at a Cabinet meeting of the County Council on 27 January 2015. The draft strategy will then be published for public consultation and will ultimately be subject to an independent inspection. Mr Mathew told the Parish Council that there will therefore be further opportunities for local councils and the public to comment.

6. Representation by Jonathan Ede of Builders Ede on planning application for Thistle Cottage

Jonathan Ede, Managing Director of Builders Ede told the Parish Council that Builders Ede is based in Witney and that the company's main activity is residential house building. Builders Ede carried out the conversion and new build at the Whitehouse Farm site in Aston. The application for the Thistle Cottage site in June 2014 was rejected by West Oxfordshire District Council because it was considered to be over-development, with the proposed houses assessed as too big for the plot. Following that decision, Builders Ede met with Phil Shaw to discuss the proposals and to attempt to reach a compromise on the issues that had been raised. The proposals have now been amended, and the size of the properties reduced. The 8 houses now proposed will have a square footage of 13,761 – lower than the application that was conditionally approved in 2012. The access position has been amended, and is now the same as was approved in the 2012 application.

Mr Ede went on to say that the existing buildings are continuing to deteriorate, and a structural engineer has carried out an assessment of the additional cost that will be required to convert and restore the properties since the last report was done in 2011. The additional costs have been deducted from the s106 contribution proposed in the 2012 application, leaving a proposed s106 contribution within this application of £78,000. Mr Ede explained that Builders Ede could attempt to submit an existing use application to seek a ruling that the site already contains 9 dwellings, and that the application to convert these to 8 dwellings does not generate any additional units, which would mean that no s106 contribution would be due. Instead of this, they are proposing a compromise and offering a contribution of £78,000. He advised that if the District Council does not grant approval for the new planning application, then Builders Ede may go down the route of making an existing use application.

The Parish Council asked Mr Ede whether the properties are connected to the mains sewer; he didn't know whether they are.

The Parish Council observed that the two garages originally planned for the site have been removed from this application, but the number of parking spaces has been kept the same.

The Parish Council expressed concern about the ownership of the large area of open space adjacent to unit 1 and asked whether this would be included in the curtilage of that unit. Mr Ede confirmed that this space will belong to unit 1 and that a covenant will be attached to it so that it is kept open – good maintenance of this space is important to Builders Ede as it forms the entrance to the site.

Richard Haines thanked Jonathan and Daniel Ede for attending the meeting. Jonathan Ede advised that if permission is granted for the development, then he would be very happy for the Parish Council to contact him direct if there are any problems during the building work.

7. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

a) Second community defibrillator

John Ordish told the Parish Council that the electrician should be fitting the defibrillator in February 2015.

There was some discussion about whether signage needs to be installed to highlight the location of this defibrillator and the one at the garage. John Ordish said that someone has volunteered to donate the signs to the parish. To put on the agenda for discussion at the January meeting.

b) Central Aston post box

C/f – no updates yet from Royal Mail.

8. Community Trust

John Ordish confirmed that he sits on the Aston & Community Trust full committee as the Parish Council's nominated representative. He advised that he is also a member of the "Sport Aston" sub-committee, but not as a representative of the Parish Council, and will therefore have a conflict of interest on matters relating to the "Sport Aston" proposals.

9. New Business

a) Sports and Recreation facilities in Aston – role of Parish Council

There was a discussion on the proposal to increase the precept for 3 years in order to build a reserve which would be used to develop further sports and recreation facilities in Aston. A motion to increase the precept in order to build a reserve of £32,000 (including the reserves at 31 March 2015) by 31 March 2018 was put to the vote, with the majority of councillors voting in favour. The increase will amount to approximately £1 per month for each council tax paying household. Information will be included in Voices to explain the rationale for the precept increase.

The issues which will need to be explored further with the Community Trust in relation to their proposed developments at the Village Hall were discussed (as included in the meeting agenda), and it was agreed that there will need to be a significant further amount of work done by both the Parish Council and the Community Trust to work them through.

b) Retender of grass cutting contract for parish verges and war memorial garden from 2015

The two tenders received were opened and reviewed. It was resolved to accept the tender from West Oxfordshire District Council.

New Business (continued)

c) Rural Oxfordshire Action Rally (ROAR) group – position of Parish Council

The letter received from ROAR had been included in the Clerk's Briefing Notes. It was agreed that it would not be appropriate for the Parish Council to affiliate with this group.

10. Parish Infrastructure

a) Cote Chapel churchyard

Jane Everex confirmed that she has joined the local committee of the Chapel as the Parish Council's representative, with the agreement of Peter Forsaith, the Chairman. At a recent meeting the committee was advised that the grants being received by Historic Chapels Trust are being reduced, and therefore the local community will be expected to raise funds to support work required at the Chapel. Donations are currently being sought for work on the dry stone wall.

b) A415 bridge at Newbridge

Richard Haines told the Parish Council that Graham Shelton (Chairman of Northmoor Parish Council) has obtained an update from Oxfordshire Trading Standards. Trading Standards is now in the final stages of preparing prosecution cases for 7 of the 9 individual vehicles that were observed breaching the weight restriction on the bridge in July. Officers from Trading Standards have been out on site 12 times in the past 3 months to enforce the limit, and Thames Valley Police have issued 3 fixed penalty notices for breaches in the past 3 months.

Charles Mathew said that he had submitted a formal County Council question on this issue asking what is going to be done to enforce the limit, and he is expecting a formal answer by 12 December. The County Council is considering all the options, including doing nothing.

Steve Good told the Parish Council that he has repeatedly raised the issue within the District Council.

c) Replacement of remaining wooden posts on war memorial green

The order to replace 6 of the posts (and remove the 7th) has been placed.

d) Bids for highways maintenance budget controlled by Charles Mathew

Charles Mathew provisionally agreed to provide 50% of the funds for the replacement posts (£375) from his Community Budget. He asked the Clerk to complete and send the form to him within the next week.

e) Repositioning of bench on war memorial green

In hand – c/f.

11. PLANNING

New planning applications

14/01496/FUL Thistle Cottage, Ham Lane, Aston
Erection of 7 dwellings and alterations and extension to main dwelling at Thistle Cottage

It was agreed that the Parish Council supports development on this site in principle, but is seeking to ensure that the development proposed will achieve the best possible result for the village. It was further agreed that this current application contains some improvements over the application which was refused by the District Council in July 2014, including the proposal for a degree of s106 funding.

PLANNING (continued)

New planning applications

14/01496/FUL Thistle Cottage, Ham Lane, Aston
Erection of 7 dwellings and alterations and extension to main dwelling at Thistle Cottage

However, by a majority vote, the Parish Council resolved to **object** to the application for the following reasons:

- inadequate parking in the development which is likely to lead to people parking on Ham Lane which will create a road safety issue. This may indicate over development of the site;
- impractical location of parking for the units fronting Ham Lane. The parking is provided at the rear of the properties, which would require the owners to access their homes through the rear entrance, walking across their gardens. This would be likely to lead to an increased risk that they would choose instead to park on Ham Lane;
- the lack of a fence or wall boundary at the front of the site could encourage people to consider parking on Ham Lane/part on Ham Lane and part on the verge/the front gardens of the properties;
- lack of appropriate turning provision for large delivery vehicles which will mean that they will not be able to turn and leave the site in forward gear, which will present a road hazard;
- concerns about the ability of the sewerage system in Aston and beyond to cope with an increase in the number of houses connected to it.

It was further agreed that the letter would repeat the concerns expressed in the response to the previous application about the detrimental impact on residents of Ham Lane during the building work and would ask the District Council to consider measures to mitigate this, including asking the developer to provide more information on how they would propose to manage the building work given the restrictions posed by the site.

It was agreed that the letter would suggest that the Parish Council's concerns in relation to the parking provision could be mitigated if there were consideration to removing trees TG6 and T3 at the front of the site which are noted in the Tree Survey Report as being poor and recommended for removal, and using the space cleared to provide additional parking.

The letter will also note that the Parish Council appreciates the inclusion of some s106 funding for affordable housing, at a level to be agreed by the District Council.

Richard Haines will attend the Lowlands Planning Committee meeting at which the application is considered and give a presentation on behalf of the Parish Council.

14/01824/FUL Post Office, High Street, Aston
14/01827/LBC Part change of use from post office to dwelling
& internal alterations (listed building consent)
No comment.

12. Finance

a) Account Balances – circulated in the Clerk's Briefing Notes

Balance on Current Account at 30 November 2014 £10,369.73
Balance on Deposit Account at 30 November 2014 £16,754.87

Finance (continued)

b) Budget for 2015/16

The second draft of the budget included in the Clerk’s Briefing Notes was discussed. It was noted that the actual quoted costs of the grass cutting and the Clerk’s salary for 2015/16 will be included in a third draft to be considered at the January meeting, at which the precept will be set.

The principle of increasing the precept to establish a designated recreation reserve had been discussed and agreed earlier in the meeting.

c) November invoices presented for approval and payment

		Statute
Clerk’s salary and working from home allowance	355.80	LGA 1972, s112
Clerk’s expenses – printing – 154 sheets @ 5p, external printing (Shillbrook) – printing of sports proposal report for 6/11/14 - £11.00	18.70	LGA 1972 s111
Richard Haines – mileage to Chairmanship course	16.65	LGA 1972 s111
West Oxfordshire District Council – emptying of dog bin in December	20.40	Litter Act 1983
Total	£411.55	

It was resolved to make the above payments, proposed by John Ordish, seconded by Paul Sparrowhawk. The cheques were signed by Richard Haines and John Ordish.

13. Date of next meetings: Thursday 8 January 2015, 7.30pm
Monthly Parish Council Meeting

14. Confidential Business

It was resolved to exclude the press and the public in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

a) Clerk’s salary review for 2015/16

The Clerk left the meeting

It was resolved to increase the Clerk’s pay to £12.65 per hour from 1 April 2015.

The Clerk rejoined the meeting.

Signeddated.....