

**MINUTES OF ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
Thursday 7 March 2024 at the Village Hall, Aston, at 7.30pm**

Members B Lings (meeting Chair)
Present: J Ordish
P Sparrowhawk
R Anstee

In Attendance: Elaine Anstee – Clerk
8 members of the public
Cllr D Levy (OCC)
Cllr C Maynard (WODC)
Cllr L Nicholls (WODC)
R La Forte (on TEAMS – non-voting)

1. It was RESOLVED as proposed by P Sparrowhawk, seconded by J Ordish, with all in agreement that B Lings would chair the meeting in the chair's absence.
2. **Apologies from Members:** There were apologies from G Ball and A Chapman.
3. **Minutes of the previous meetings** of the Parish Council on 1st February 2024 were agreed and it was RESOLVED as proposed by P Sparrowhawk, seconded by J Ordish, with all in agreement, that the meeting Chair signs them.
4. **Parish Councillors - Disclosure of interests on agenda items** – R La Forte declared a nonpecuniary interest in Agenda Item 12 as he is a trustee.
5. It was RESOLVED, as proposed by R Anstee, seconded by P Sparrowhawk, with all in agreement to move agenda items 12 and 13 in front of agenda item 11.
6. **Meeting Open for Public Participation** - None
7. **WODC/OCC Matters**
OCC Cllr D Levy – Report attached at Appendix 1.
WODC Cllr C Maynard – Report attached at Appendix 2.
WODC Cllr L Nicholls – reported that she has taken a different approach for putting pressure on Thames Water and is in talks with the Secretary of State. This is focussing on 3 areas, Environment Agency, Thames Water and the planning process. There is a new health and well-being programme for those with long term health conditions ([Sport and physical activity - West Oxfordshire District Council \(westoxon.gov.uk\)](https://www.westoxon.gov.uk)).
8. **Matters Arising from Previous Meetings**
 - a) *Quick updates:*
 - *Neighbourhood Plan* – Bluestone Planning have been asked for indicative quotes for different levels of support/consultancy.
 - *Electronic Speed Signs* – form submitted with detail on 7th March.
 - *Cote Chapel* – No update.
 - *Gate at St James Church* – RFO sourcing quotes.

b) *Traffic calming update and other traffic issues.*

An article has been submitted to the Voices editorial team for the next edition in March and requesting residents' thoughts.

20 mph letter to OCC Highways has been drafted and shared by email on the 4th March.

c) *Thames Water meeting – for information*

Available councillors from the Parish Council met with Thames Water on the 28th February 2024. In summary from the discussions:

- Work to rectify the connection of storm water to the foul water network at St Joseph's Court will commence on 20 August, for completion by end-September.
- Work planned this year to upgrade Bampton Sewage Treatment Works has been postponed for at least 12 to 18 months. It is now included in AMP 8 (2025-30). This may have implications for the enforcement of conditions for the Brier Furlong (and other) housing development.
- Sewage discharges – there is capacity in the network to handle foul water but with the increased rainfall and longer periods of high-water table infiltration is overwhelming the system. Thames Water have installed flow monitors north and south of the Bull Street Pumping Station as a first step to identify the source(s) of infiltration. Initial results are expected in the next 2 to 3 months.
- The Parish Council and Thames Water will keep the engagement ongoing.

d) *Anti-Social Behaviour*

On 27th February it was reported that another car had left the road and mounted the pavement/hedgerow along North Street. This is the 5th reported incident in the last 2.5 years.

9. Planning

New planning applications - None

Update on Ongoing Planning Applications – For Information

- a) Brier Furlong (nee TERRA) – ongoing reporting of CTMP breaches and letter sent to WODC Enforcement. The WODC officer who has been appointed to monitor the development has been in contact with the clerk and requested/been supplied with contact details for the site manager. The 'letter of no confidence' to WODC regarding planning. All were content with the draft circulated by the Chair. Chair to complete the final version and send to the Leader of the Council. Out of courtesy, WODC Cllr Maynard to be sent an advance copy.
- b) Marsh Furlong – update under agenda item 8c
- c) St Joseph's Court – update under agenda item 8c.
- d) North Farm – report circulated by email and included in PC article for Voices in March. An outline planning application is expected to be made by OCC in Jun/Jul 24.

Update on Previous Planning Applications

Reference	23/03276/CND
Alternative Reference	PP-12661715
Application Validated	Tue 12 Dec 2023
Address	Land North Of Foxwood Close Aston Bampton Oxfordshire
Proposal	Discharge of conditions 3 (schedule of materials) 6 (desk study) 10 (details of solar panels and air source heat pumps) 11 (landscape scheme) 14 (Landscape and Ecological Management Plan) and 19 (scheme to provide biodiversity net gain enhancement measures) of Planning Permission 22/00986/FUL
Status	Decided
Decision	Approve
Decision Issued Date	Tue 06 Feb 2024

Reference	23/03090/HHD
Alternative Reference	PP-12609766
Application Validated	Wed 29 Nov 2023
Address	3 Bovington Yard Aston Bampton Oxfordshire OX18 2BQ
Proposal	Installation of a wooden structure (with 8 x 250W Luxor solar panels mounted onto it) on the south elevation of the property.
Status	Withdrawn
Decision	Application Withdrawn
Decision Issued Date	Tue 13 Feb 2024

10. New Business

- a) *Half yearly review of external Parish Council assets*
J Ordish agreed to check the assets and report at the April meeting.
- b) *D-Day – 80th Commemorations - Flag*
It was RESOLVED, as proposed by R Anstee, seconded by P Sparrowhawk, with all in agreement to purchase a 5' by 3' D-Day 80th commemoration flag. It will be flown at St James Church, Aston.

11. Community Trust

- a) An update on the MUGA which is due to go to pre-app with resubmission of planning application by June 2024.
- b) It was RESOLVED as proposed by J Ordish, seconded by P Sparrowhawk, with all in agreement to approve a grant of £697.11 to the Community Trust in relation to the playground inspections and maintenance.

12. Parish Infrastructure

- a) *Village maintenance*
To identify any current maintenance work required. Budget remaining for 2023/24 is £1385 – none.
- b) Cote Turn – waste bin – awaiting pricing from WODC/Publica.
- c) BBOWT Car Park – awaiting response from BBOWT.

13. Governance

a) Loans and Investment Policy/Annual Investment Strategy 2023-24

It was RESOLVED as proposed by J Ordish, seconded by P Sparrowhawk, with all in agreement to adopt the Loans and Investment Policy/Annual Investment Strategy for 24-25. It was further RESOLVED, as proposed by R Anstee, seconded by P Sparrowhawk, with all in agreement, to incorporate these into the Financial Regulations as appendices with effect from the 2025/26 financial year. (Draft on pages 10 to 13 of the briefing notes. These papers are submitted for discussion, decision and resolution.

b) *Annual review of Effectiveness of Internal Control/Financial Regulations*

It was RESOLVED as proposed by R Anstee, seconded by P Sparrowhawk, with all in agreement to approve the annual review of effectiveness of internal controls with the following amendments:

Section – Legal Powers – remove the first three lines as GPC is the main legal power for the council to use. In the event of loss of GPC the first 3 lines to be reinstated.

Section – Payments Controls – Remove first paragraph about purchase orders.

Section – Payroll Controls – added in 'RFO' on lines one and two. Amended the third sentence to say 'The salaries are paid by SDO, the SDO payment authorised by two councillors, and minuted, at the start of the year or when a change is made and duly minuted.

14. FINANCE

a) *Account balances – noted.*

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

c) *Renewal of Community First Oxon Membership*

It was RESOLVED as proposed by B Lings, seconded by R Anstee, with all in agreement, to renew the Community First Oxon membership for 2024-25 at a cost of £70.

d) *Renewal of membership of CPRE*

It was RESOLVED as proposed by J Ordish, seconded by P Sparrowhawk, with the majority in agreement, to renew the CPRE membership for 2024-25 at a cost of £36.

e) *OALC Renewal*

It was RESOLVED as proposed by R Anstee, seconded by J Ordish, with all in agreement, to renew the OALC membership for 2024-25 at a cost of £311.89 (Incl VAT).

f) *ICO Renewal*

It was RESOLVED as proposed by P Sparrowhawk, , seconded by J Ordish, with all in agreement, to renew the ICO registration for 2024-25 at a cost of £35 (paid by DD on 15.3.24).

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- g) It was RESOLVED to approve the following payments for the period March 24 as proposed by J Ordish, seconded by P Sparrowhawk, with all in agreement.

	NET	VAT	Gross
Clerk's expenses - Microsoft £53.52	44.60	8.92	53.52
SLCC Membership – RFO – Inv MEM248350-1	85.00		85.00
SLCC ILCA Qualification Inv QL204896-1	120.00	24.00	144.00
WODC – Emptying Bins – Inv 3355676x	652.86	130.57	783.43
D Johnson – Inv 2437	30.00		30.00
ICO – DD – 15/03/2024	35.00		35.00
CFO Renewal 24-25	70.00		70.00
OALC membership 24-25 Inv A00052/2024/1	259.91	51.98	311.89
CPRE Membership 24-25	36.00		36.00
Community Trust Grant (play areas)	697.11		697.11
Total to be decided and approved	£2,030.48	£215.47	£2,245.95
RFO Salary including WFH allowance	185.75		185.75
Clerk - Overtime	802.31		802.31
HMRC (Tax and NI on above)	306.37		306.37
Total of already approved/paid	£1,294.43	£0.00	£1,294.43
Monthly Standing Orders/DDs			
Clerk's Salary including WFH Allowance	412.41		412.41
HMRC PAYE	98.40		98.40
Total SDOs	£510.81	£0.00	£510.81
Total	£3,835.72	£215.47	£4,051.19

15. Parish Councillors' and clerk's reports from meetings attended since last meeting.

P Sparrowhawk attended the Bampton Flood Prevention Group on the 15th February. Minutes previously circulated.

R La Forte – History Group – the history boards are now on the groups to do list, and a subgroup has been established to design and source the boards.

16. Matters arising since publication of agenda/

Matters which Councillors may wish to raise for inclusion on next agenda.

(For discussion only)

Aston and Cote School Governors emails and separate funding request letter. Clerk to reply to headteacher and explain the funding request process with required information.

Email about the Brier Furlong development, S106 and Forest School – the clerk will respond to advise they contact the relevant council (WODC and OCC) plus give the Contracts Manager's contact details for the site.

Letter requesting funding from parents taken as 'for information only'.

17. Date of next meeting: Thursday 4th April 2024, 7.30pm

the monthly meeting of Parish Council. P Sparrowhawk gave his apologies in advance. Meeting closed at 21.31pm.

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

Appendix 1

CLlr D Levy (OCC)

Tuesday 20 Feb was the Full Council meeting of the County Council at which we set a budget for the next financial year. The administration at County Hall, of which I am the Cabinet member with responsibility for finance, does not have an overall majority, after the departure of Labour from the Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance. We therefore ended up with a very long meeting, trying to get agreement across the parties. And finally ended up adopting a slightly more expansive budget than I had thought ideal, but still well within the parameters of what is safe.

We agreed above inflation increases in spending on Adult Social Care and Children's services, and additional money going into flood defences and roads. We are offsetting this with a set of savings in areas such as reducing the layers of management and putting effort into ensuring that our children can be looked after in Oxfordshire rather than elsewhere. The County Council remains financially robust, but there are limits to what can be done within the funding available.

It has been a complex path to get to this point, involving really useful consultation exercises, and grappling with the government producing its "final" settlement, in two parts, so that we only discovered our final expected income earlier this month. It is a ridiculous process, and I hope that any incoming government, at the very least, commits to multiyear settlements so we can plan our spending and delivery and increase our ability to provide the services residents rightly demand, and the end to bidding in competition with other authorities for individual time limited pots of money for specific projects.

Flooding - As we have all noticed, the wet weather has continued for the past few months, and demonstrated the vulnerability of many places to flooding. The County Council is the lead flood authority and works closely with the Emergency Services and WODC to respond to floods and try to prevent them. There will be a full cross-agency debriefing in the spring, and I would expect the input of parish councils will be sought.

This is mostly a separate issue to the issues with Thames Water and sewage, and we will continue to put effort into putting pressure on them and on the Environment Agency. As part of this process, the County Council has appointed the leaders of West Oxfordshire and of Vale of White Horse District Councils, Councillors Andy Graham and Bethia Thomas, to act as joint County Council water champions.

Roads - A40 update. No further progress to report. Discussions with Homes England continue. The public enquiry on the other HIF scheme, based in Didcot, commenced on 20 Feb. You may have seen that the A40 cycle route is being scraped, to restore it to its original width after decades of neglect. It makes a huge difference. The section near Cassington and the Barnard Gate to Witney section has now been completed.

Road closure - There is a road closure to mend the road leading from Chimney. I have been asked why there is work on a minor road rather than the money being spent on potholes. The answer is that we have a regular capital programme of work on highways, and you can find details of the planned activity on the County Council website at Map (highway-iams.uk) We can't ignore roads just because they aren't widely used – if we did, they would be unusable by anyone. This is alongside the reactive programme reached via Fix-my-Street. There is of course far too little money available for any of our highway's activity.

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Traffic Filters - As you may have read, once Botley Road is reopened to motor traffic, when National Rail finish their work, in October, the traffic filters in Oxford City Centre will be going live. They are designed to speed up buses and give bus passengers confidence that they will arrive quickly and on time.

Everywhere that you can currently drive to in Oxfordshire will still be accessible to drivers. The only difference is that you can't use the city centre as a through route. So, if you wanted to go, let's say, from Aston to Cowley Road, you would use the ring road and come up the Cowley Road from the BMW plant or via Donnington Bridge, just as you probably would today.

Our expectation is that nearly all people living outside the ring road will notice no difference, although they might be more tempted to use public transport as the services improve. As ever, please contact me on dan.levy@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Appendix 2

CLlr C Maynard (WODC)

District councillor update.

Pre-App enquiry received for housing north of North Farm

Keen eyed locals have spotted hi-viz workers in fields north of Aston. I've asked WODC Planning whether anything has been submitted to them and been told that a pre-app enquiry for housing to the north of North Farm has been submitted. The detail of pre-app is not shared as they are commercially sensitive. If/when an application is received consultation will occur in the usual manner.

District Council passes balanced budget.

On Wednesday 28th February, WODC passed a balanced budget. Given that local government funding has been cut 23% in real terms since 2011, that's quite an achievement.

Police front desks

The local Lib Dems are launching a campaign to bring back the front desk at Witney's police station. The police front desk was closed during Covid and has not re-opened since. This means that if a resident wants to go and meet a police officer, they need to travel to either Oxford or Abingdon to do this. While some people are comfortable discussing issues either by phone or online, many people are not and want to be able to meet face to face. We understand that the police force has a deep commitment to serving and protecting the public. Part of this commitment is about ensuring that the public has direct, physical access to the police, which is both practically useful and helps maintain and build trust. Police front desks have re-opened in Covid in various places around the country, such as Devon and Hampshire, and we are keen that Thames Valley Police chart a course towards re-opening Witney's front desk.

Sewage

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The overall picture remains dire. Water bills have been increased. This will likely prevent the water companies from going bust until at least after the general election and helps out shareholders and their bankers, but residents are taking the hit. Operationally, there is no sign that Thames Water is grasping the enormity of the challenge to get our sewage network and works up to scratch. Aston's sewage is pumped to Bampton and as I write this, it has not rained for five days and Bampton's works is currently dumping sewage.

Some progress has been made:

- Thames Water has now installed flow monitors across the Aston catchment. That's a positive development as the flow data will give a much more accurate picture as to where the worst infiltration areas.
- We've just received the pump run times for the pumping stations at Bull St and at Bampton. We're now working with WASP on analysing these. What's immediately apparent is that the pumps at Bull St are insufficient to handle the flow received. Many readers will know that already.

What is needed – and there is no sign of it actually happening – is a) for the improvements to Bampton's works not to be bumped to the 2025-2030 work period and b) for TW to commit to sealing the worst leaking sections of its network in Aston and Cote.