

**MINUTES OF ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON  
Thursday 7 December 2023 at the Village Hall, Aston, at 7.30pm**

**Members** R La Forte (Chair)

**Present:** J Ordish  
R Anstee  
B Lings  
P Sparrowhawk

**In Attendance:** Elaine Anstee – Clerk  
9 members of the public  
Cllr Dan Levy (OCC)

1. **Apologies from Members:** There were apologies from G Ball and A Chapman.
2. **Minutes of the previous meeting** of the Parish Council on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023 were agreed it was RESOLVED as proposed by R Anstee, seconded by J Ordish, with all in agreement, that the Chair signs them.
3. **Parish Councillors - Disclosure of interests on agenda items** – R La Forte declared a nonpecuniary interest in Agenda Item 12 as he is a trustee.
4. **Meeting Open for Public Participation** –  
On the WODC Planning portal under the planning application for the TERRA development there is notification that the diversion of foul water work to be done by March 2024 (Letter from Thames Water dated 2.10.23 on WODC Planning Portal under 23/02858/CND). There are no details of the planned works and the clerk to follow up with Thames Water for more detail.  
Ham Lane - farmer late harvesting has churned up the lane beyond 6 Redmayes. There is confusion about who is responsible for the maintenance of the road/track as some homeowner's deeds say they are responsible for half the track immediately outside their property, and others that they are not responsible at all. The footpath along the side of the track is understood to be attributed to the Aston Drainage board (ADB) and there is understanding that ADB manage the road but not liable for repairing it. The footpath has become so poor that people are diverting onto the field and therefore trespassing.
  - Clerk to speak to OCC Highways
  - Approach John, Welch and Stammers as the ABD secretary to get understanding of land owned/managed by ADB and the responsibilities.
  - Footpath has to be maintained by the landowner and if not, the OCC can enforce.
  - D Levy (OCC Councillor) - To speak to the footpath team at OCC to look at the maintenance and chase owner.
5. **WODC/OCC Matters**  
OCC Councillor D Levy full report at (Appendix 1).

## 6. 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 – Site visit with Highways on the 13<sup>th</sup> December at 11am.*

b) *Footpaths/Treescaping*

No update.

c) *Anti-Social Behaviour*

No reports.

## 7. Planning

### New planning applications

<b>Reference</b>	<b>23/02963/HHD</b>
Alternative Reference	PP-12582204
Application Validated	Mon 27 Nov 2023
Address	Western View Cottage Back Lane Aston OX18 2DQ.
Proposal	Proposed porch extension.
Status	Under consideration
No Objection	

<b>Reference</b>	<b>23/03102/FUL</b>
Alternative Reference	PP-12573870
Application Validated	Tue 21 Nov 2023
Address	Aston Repair Depot, The Square, Aston OX18 2DL.
Proposal	Demolition of existing garage and erection of 2 semi-detached dwellings.
Status	Under consideration
No Object with same comments as last time re connection to the sewage system.	

### Update on Ongoing Planning Applications – For Information

- a) Terra – Letter from Living Space Housing (circulated by email to councillors on 21/11/2023) and work started on the Harris Fencing on the 22 November and now complete. There has been a meeting between the Marsh Furlong residents and the developers. Strict enforcement of conditions is vital and written record of activities will be maintained.
- RLF/CM/DL met at WODC with the leader of the council/head of planning/CEO to talk about the WODC approach to the appeal and after the appeal. The impression was that the planning officers had made the decision already before the appeal. 1<sup>st</sup> positive is that there was an open and transparent meeting but apart from this it

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 7 December 2023

was disappointing. The head of planning was directed by the leader to email a summary of the meeting to RLF and this has not happened yet. The head of planner stated that the case was unwinnable so why should they put in the work. There was refusal by officers to work with the Parish Council and head of planning said that it was not their practice to collude with the Parish Councils.

Comments – reinforced lack of confidence in WODC planning officers and their lack of willingness to listen to their own councillors. Noted that there is no statutory requirement for further Parish Council involvement in changes of conditions, but we can be active in making sure they are watched and adhered to. We must have greater transparency and consultation with the residents and going forward the Local Plan 2041 is an important document.

- b) North Farm – It has been identified that there are bats in the farmhouse so there must be a plan to this. Any planning application will come back to Parish Council first.
- c) Hawthorns – agree to remove from ongoing as now complete.
- d) Marsh Furlong – the water pumping station transfer to Thames Water is under discussion.
- e) Children’s Home – as of 26<sup>th</sup> November there appeared to be ground works still to be completed.
- f) St Joseph’s Court – Surface water and drainage. OCC/Thames Water working on it on the 7<sup>th</sup> December.

### Update on Previous Planning Applications

<b>Reference</b>	<b>23/02858/CND</b>
Alternative Reference	PP-12549867
Application Validated	Fri 27 Oct 2023
Address	Land North of Foxwood Close Aston Bampton Oxfordshire
Proposal	Discharge of Conditions
	3 (schedule of materials),
	4 (surface water drainage scheme),
	6 (desk study to assess the nature and extent of any contamination),
	7 (Construction Environmental Method Statement),
	8 (Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation),
	9 (programme of archaeological evaluation and mitigation),
	10 (details of the solar panels and air source heat pumps),
	11 (detailed landscape scheme),
	14 (Landscape and Ecological Management Plan),
	15 (written confirmation has been provided by Thames Water) and
	19 (scheme to provide biodiversity net gain enhancement measures) of Planning Permission 22/00986/FUL
Status	Unknown
Decision	Split Decision Part Approve Part Refuse
Decision Issued Date	Fri 24 Nov 2023

R La Forte will look at this in detail and follow up accordingly.

### 8. New Business

- a) *Voices Grant Application 23-24*

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 7 December 2023

It was RESOLVED as proposed by R La Forte, seconded by R Anstee, with all in agreement to make a grant of £1,250 as budgeted to Voices.

*b) Aston and Cote Day Centre Small Grant Application*

It was RESOLVED as proposed by R La Forte, seconded by R Anstee, with 2 other councillors in agreement to grant £500 from the Small Grant budget to Aston and Cote Day Centre for the purchase of food for the meals provided to users. B Lings voted against. Letter to accompany grant to include the requirements of the terms of the grant for providing evidence of how the grant has been spent.

*c) Oxfordshire County Council Lane Rental Scheme Proposal Consultation*

It was agreed to respond stating that though the Parish Council would want the impacts of infrastructure works mitigated to reduce disruption to travel they would prefer to see utilities and road works being managed collaboratively to reduce the number of times a road may be dug up. Additionally concerns raised over who would, in reality, be paying for the lane rental and that contractors would be under extra pressure to complete works in a shorter time frame which could impact the quality of the work and conditions that workers were working with.

*d) Domain Transfer to FASTHOST*

For information – the Gov.uk domain has been transferred to FASTHOSTS and the remaining 2 domains will be transferred so they are all under one domain registrar. This had to happen due to changes in the Gov.UK governance.

*e) Oxfordshire Councils Charter*

It was agreed to respond that the Parish Council has an excellent working relationship with the district and county councillors and consider this to be the example that should be followed. Communications with officers at both district and county need to be more consistent.

*f) Keep Britain Tidy*

Parish spring clean on next agenda.

**9. Governance – Policies for Review – Scheme of Delegation**

It was RESOLVED as proposed by R La Forte, seconded by P Sparrowhawk, with all in agreement to adopt the proposed scheme of delegation with the following amendments:

- Under the section 'Planning' to that any communication by email for planning applications that cannot wait for the next meeting to be forwarded with RESPONSE require by 'date' in the email title.
- Remove the section titled 'Staffing Management and Finance Committee'.
- Add paragraph numbers.

## 10. Community Trust

Car parking – a long and protracted debate with the main issue being football parking. It is prohibitively expensive to extend the car park for the minority of time. Instead to make improvements to the existing car park and white line bays.

MUGA – there have been delays for a bat report and this work is being done so that application can be submitted.

Repairs to roof – about £7k plus is needed and they can apply to Parish Council for 50% to match fund.

Solar panels – J Angus is leading on this and has been researching grants and other funding opportunities to include EVCH points. There is some s106 funding available at WODC.

## 11. Parish Infrastructure

### a) *Village maintenance*

To identify any current maintenance work required. Budget remaining for 2023/24 is £1,445.

D Johnson has cleared the end of Bull Street, and both ends of Back Lane. The clerk and D Johnson will do a walk round in the next month to identify and further areas that need clearing.

### b) *Asset Check*

J Ordish present his report that there were no maintenance requirements, and everything was where it should be. There are road signs that need replacing and he will bring a list to the January meeting.

## 12. FINANCE

a) Account balances – noted.

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

### c) *Unity Trust Debit Card*

The paperwork needed to be resubmitted and re-signed which was been completed at the start of this meeting.

### d) *Proposed Budget 2024-25*

It was RESOLVED as proposed by J Ordish, seconded by P Sparrowhawk, with all in agreement, for the budget, as presented to be approved. This being expenditure of £35,133.

### e) *Precept for 2024-25*

WODC has advised that the council tax base will be 621.93. This is an increase of 2.5% in band D properties in the parish. Keeping the precept at £49.74 for 2024/25 will give an increase of £769 for the year on the Precept.

It was RESOLVED as proposed by R La Forte and seconded by B Lings, with all in agreement, that the precept be set at £30,935 and that the council makes no increase to the £49.74 per Band D equivalent household for the 2024-25 precept year.

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 7 December 2023

f) *Defibrillator Replacement Parts – Aston Garage*

It was RESOLVED as proposed by R La Forte, seconded by J Ordish, with all in agreement, to resolve to pay for the replacement of the battery and pads for the Defibrillator at the Aston Garage. This is required due to its recent use. The cost is £442.40 and will come from the defibrillator budget of £500.

g) *Scribe – Purchase of Annual Subscription*

It was decided to delay this until the recruitment of the RFO was complete.

h) *It was RESOLVED to approve the following payments for the period December 23 as proposed by R La Forte, seconded by P Sparrowhawk, with all in agreement.*

	NET	VAT	Gross Amount
Clerk's expenses 267 x 7p/Microsoft £50.16	60.49	8.36	68.85
D Johnson – Grass cutting/WM Maintenance/Crocuses/ Gutter clearance - Invoice 2432& 2433	465.00		465.00
WODC –Grounds Maintenance Inv 33549872	369.01	73.80	442.81
A Ball – Defib parts (paid for so to reimburse)	442.40		442.40
Aston and Cote Community Trust Inv 1 – Hall Hire	78.00		78.00
<i>Aston and Cote Day Centre Grant</i>	500.00		500.00
<i>Voice Grant 2023</i>	1,250.00		1,250.00
<b>Total to be decided and approved</b>	<b>£3,614.90</b>	<b>£82.16</b>	<b>£3,247.06</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>£3,675.71</b>	<b>£82.16</b>	<b>£3,757.87</b>

**13. CONFIDENTIAL – Recruitment of RFO- REDACTED**

**14. Confidential – Clerk's Pay Review, Hours and Appraisal - REDACTED**

**15. Parish Councillors' reports from meetings attended since last meeting.**

None

**16. Matters arising since publication of agenda/**

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

**(For discussion only)**

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 7 December 2023

**17. Date of next meeting: Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2024, 7.30pm**  
the monthly meeting of Parish Council

Meeting closed at 22.00pm.

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

## Appendix A

### County Councillor Report, 7 December 2023

Dan Levy

Please find a report on areas covered by the County Council which may be of interest.

**Budget** The budget at County Hall is currently being created. The headline figures are that there are £36m of pressures, caused by underfunding, by demographic changes and by inflation, including a higher-than-expected rise in the National Living Wage by 9.8% with no additional money from the government that announced it. We spend over half the budget on adult and children's services, including social care. The County Council is making savings and becoming more efficient. For instance, we are building new children's homes, including one in Aston, to enable us to look after Oxfordshire children in the county. The headline gap between expected income and expected spending for 24-35 currently stands at £9m, which we will have to fill to create a balanced budget. Despite this we are in a better position than most other County Councils of all political persuasions. There is a consultation open, which can be found on the County Council website. We do want to hear from as many residents as possible.

**Roads** 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. There has been some discussion about timings, and how they fit in with school activity, but this is the best we can get and still have the work done. The road will remain open for people on bikes. There is also a closure planned for Tar Lane, between Stanton Harcourt and Witney, in January, to replace the bridge parapets on the A40 crossing. That will last several weeks. There was another serious crash at the Barnard Gate junction a few weeks ago. Officers are investigating how to make this crossing safe. It was going to be part of the reworking of the A40 using money from Homes England, but this phase of the project has had to be deferred as the costs of the whole project have exceeded what government made available – this was predictable from the point at which the P&R/A40 scheme was first sketched out. So, we do need to do something. This might include shutting the junction to right turns, which will be very inconvenient mainly for people living north of the A40 in places like Freeland, who use the junction to get onto the A40 going westbound. The National Highways work on the A420/A34 junction continues to cause long delays. The County Council is powerless to get NH to manage this better, nor to coordinate its work with other works organised by the County Council.

**Botley West Solar Farm** The next phase of consultation is now open. Residents can and should have their say on the scheme proposed by PVDP and mainly using land owned by Blenheim. Councillors like me who sit in cabinets are taking the view that we are best commenting through the councils, which will have an obligation formally to report their concerns to the secretary of state, who will be making the decision. Those councillors who are not so bound are free to stand with those residents who are making their voices heard. As ever, please contact me with queries, comments or requests.  
dan.levy@oxfordshire.gov.uk