

**DRAFT MINUTES OF ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 19TH MAY 2015
IN THE VILLAGE HALL, ASTON AT 8.00 PM**

- 1. Present:** Parish Councillors:
Richard Haines (Chairman)
Jane Everex
Ben Lings
John Ordish
Paul Sparrowhawk
Jane West
Phil West
- Helen Sandhu (Parish Clerk)
Hilary Fenton - District Councillor
Charles Mathew – County Councillor
PCSO Sandra Syphas, Thames Valley Police
39 members of the public

- 2. Apologies:** Steve Good – District Councillor

3. Welcome

Richard Haines, Chairman of the Parish Council, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the members of the Parish Council and the Clerk.

4. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting on 17th June 2014

Were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

5. Thames Valley Police

PCSO Sandra Syphas gave PC Martyn McHale's apologies – he had hoped to attend, but this had not proved possible at the last minute. PCSO Syphas read from the report prepared by PC McHale: between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015 there were 8 recorded crimes in the parish – 6 thefts, 1 attempted theft and 1 person arrested in possession of drugs. PCSO Syphas told the meeting that she joined the neighbourhood team in March 2015, so the area is new to her, but she has been working hard to get to know local people and organisations over the last 3 months. PCSO Syphas said that she has worked as a PCSO for seven years, previously in Abingdon. She apologised that the team had been relatively "thin on the ground" during the past year, due to the retirement of the previous neighbourhood officer and the absence of one sergeant on maternity leave. The Eynsham area team is now back up to full strength, with two PCSOs, one neighbourhood officer and one part-time sergeant. PCSO Syphas outlined the issues that people had raised with her during her visits to Aston, including anti-social behaviour, speeding and parking, particularly outside the school (with this latter issue being a problem at all schools). The team has been in Aston over the past couple of weeks using the speed detection radar. It is clear that there are some speeding issues, with the worst area identified being Bampton Road as drivers leave Aston. PCSO Syphas said that some local parents have asked for Community Speedwatch signs to be put up. PCSO Syphas advised that these signs only have an effect if they are put up in one location for around 3 months and then moved to another site.

PCSO Syphas went on to talk about the protection of property using smart water. This is widely used on church lead roofs. It is a clear liquid which means that people cannot tell if

property has been marked with it. It is, however, visible under UV light, so is used to identify people who may have been responsible for stealing/damaging/handling stolen property marked with it. A company has now developed a household kit which is available for purchase. The spray can be used to mark anything of value. The Police sponsor the kits, but they do come at a cost – if bought direct from the company, the kits cost £59.98 + VAT per year (the annual charge being required to enable users to display signage and maintain a unique registration with the company). However, the kit can be bought direct from Thames Valley Police for a one off charge of £15. PCSO Syphas said that if there is a wide takeup of the system in a police area, then a community can install signage saying “Thieves beware, smart water in this area” which can act as a good burglary deterrent.

Q: Will drivers identified as speeding during the recent speed check be told?

A: During the check any vehicles identified as speeding had their vehicle number, time and day recorded. A letter will be sent to the registered owner of the vehicle – this will just be a “you were seen...” letter; no fine or penalty can be levied as the PCSOs don’t have the authority to record the incidents as formal offences. However, if the same vehicle is identified as speeding repeatedly, the registered owner could receive a visit from the Roads Policing Team which could lead to a fine. The procedural process to deal with offenders is slower when done by PCSOs than it is if speeding detection is done by a Roads Police Officer with a speeding gun. The PCSOs carry out their check to pinpoint problem areas so that a Roads Police Officer can then be requested to attend at the same site to use the formal speed gun (or van) which means that on-the-spot fines can be levied. These officers are in great demand, so a neighbourhood team must prove that there is a need for them to attend a specific location.

Q: Can the community get involved in speed detection?

A: A community speed watch team can be set up, and this will enable the community to build up speeding statistics. There is already one local community speed watch team in operation in North Leigh. If anyone is interested in exploring this further, they should contact the PCSO.

Turning to the issue of community support in policing matters, PCSO Syphas told the meeting that the local Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) is looking for new members. The NAG meets every couple of months in Eynsham, and there is no member from Aston. The NAG seeks to identify issues of local concern and to find ways in which they can be tackled.

Q: I have already discussed with you my concerns about people parking too close to junctions.

A: I have been out to look at the location in the parish you told me about, and whilst I have seen some vehicles parked close to the junction, they have not been close enough for us to take action (the vehicle needs to be within 10m of the junction). The other location you told me about is outside our police neighbourhood area, and I will need to contact the PCSO of that area to discuss the issue with them.

Q: How do we get more information about smart water?

A: Richard Haines, as editor of Voices, said that he will get hold of the information and put it in a future edition of Voices.

A: There is also a YouTube video which gives more information.

PCSO Syphas told the meeting that the neighbourhood team is holding a “Have Your Say” meeting in the village hall on Saturday 11 July, with cream teas to be served by Aston Brownies.

6. Aston, Cote, Shifford & Chimney Parish Council – Richard Haines, Chairman

“It has been yet another eventful year. Without doubt one of the most important topics over the past year has been the planning applications for residential developments. At last year’s Annual Parish Meeting we reported that the developer West Waddy had just been granted outline planning permission by the West Oxfordshire District (WODC) planning committee for a 38 home development on the land between Saxel Close and the Village Hall. This was granted with conditions regarding sewerage treatment, an anti-flood water retention system and that 50% ‘affordable’ homes be included. The developer has not yet submitted a full planning application to WODC, and construction cannot begin until a full application has been approved.

However, a consequence of outline planning having been granted for that development is that the envelope of Aston village has been extended. The fear expressed at that time by this Parish Council to WODC was that it exposed the land on the opposite side of Cote Rd adjacent to Foxwood to a similar development proposal. Indeed the developer, Gladman, has now submitted an outline planning application to WODC planning for a 44 home development on that land following a period of public consultation which had 25 responses, all objecting.

The Parish Council has already expressed its concern to Gladman that they have not effectively engaged with our community at the public consultation stage. The Parish Council has refused to attend a private meeting with Gladman where you the public were to be excluded. Gladman also refused to attend a Parish Council meeting. We have also communicated our general objection to this development. The Parish Council will consider its formal response to the planning proposal at the June Parish Council Meeting. Members of the public will be very welcome to air their views during the ‘Meeting open for public debate’ agenda item. However, please note that this will be held on Wednesday 3rd of June and not Thursday 4th June.

Two other smaller developments have been granted planning permission by WODC planning, neither of which include ‘affordable’ housing. The Abbey Mill Homes (North St Farm) 7 home development is already under construction. Whilst no major concerns were raised by the Parish Council regarding the development itself, quite a few residents raised concerns about the poor driving visibility on North Street following the erection of the large green security fence. The Parish Council had already raised the issue with both WODC planning and OCC Highways (on whose land the fence had been erected). Although WODC had no issue with the fence as it is only a temporary structure, OCC Highways agreed that a road safety hazard existed and there was insufficient visual splay for both road users and traffic entering and leaving the site by the entrance on the bend. The developers have subsequently been required to move part of the fence further back into the site and to also retrospectively obtain a hoarding licence.

The Ede Homes (Thistle Cottage) 8 home development has seen a succession of plans withdrawn or refused by WODC planning. Whilst most residents agreed there was a real need for this site to be developed, this needed to be done sympathetically to its location and not to the detriment of residents in Ham Lane. The Parish Council was particularly concerned that insufficient parking on the site would lead to overspill parking in Ham Lane. At the WODC planning meeting in December the Parish Council was able to speak and as a direct result get the plans changed to include extra parking prior to planning being granted. Ede Homes are now in the process of submitting a Construction Management Plan which must be agreed by WODC planning before construction can commence.

I mentioned before ‘affordable homes’ in the parish. Several years ago the Parish Council circulated a questionnaire within the parish which identified about 8 residents who would be

seeking affordable housing if they were to stay in the parish. Within the last year the rules on affordable housing have changed so that developments of ten or fewer homes no longer need to have a number of affordable homes within them. So whether we agree with it or not, the only way to offer affordable housing within the Parish will be through the larger developments such as the West Waddy development. However it is worth considering that if we add together the four developments I've just talked about Aston village could increase in size by about 100 homes or 20% and with 41 affordable homes within the next year or so.

To finish off this section about housing, the Parish Council has responded to consultations for the draft OCC Local Transport Plan to 2031 and the draft West Oxfordshire Local Plan, which is proposing an annual build rate of 525 homes to 2031 in the district. One of our main criticisms is the lack of clarity on how main routes such as the A40 into Oxford will be improved to enable the sustainable growth of housing within our area. Indeed one of the major desires of the Plans is for a significant increase in the number of people to be able to either walk or cycle from their homes to work or use effective public transport. It has to be said that with a potential 20% increase in housing within our Parish that desire is meaningless.

We have all seen the For Sale sign on the Red Lion in the Square. In fact the pub has been on the market for some time as a 'going-concern', but with no investors attracted. In May 2014 the Parish Council listed the Red Lion as an 'Asset of Community Value' with West Oxfordshire District Council. This means that before the owner, Enterprise, can dispose of the property as a 'non-going concern' our community if it wishes can request a right-to-bid six month moratorium period in which to form a 'Community Interest Group' to bid for the pub and run it as a not-for-profit company or charity on behalf of the community.

Following the interest shown by members of our community, the Parish Council informed WODC that a Community Interest Group wishes to investigate the potential to raise sufficient funds to purchase the pub. This means the group now has until 16th September 2015 to submit an intention to bid for the asset, to run it on a not-for-profit basis. During this period the pub is still on the market for immediate purchase as a 'going-concern' where investors would be able to buy and run it on a commercial basis, i.e. take profits from running it. We understand that there are now two separate parties who are looking at the possibility of purchasing the Red Lion as a 'going-concern'.

The Parish Council pays for village maintenance such as grass verge and playing field cutting, emptying litter and dog bins, etc., from the Precept which is collected as part of your council tax bill. This year the precept has increased by about £1 per month per household. In several years' time when the West Waddy development is fully occupied, the Parish Council will receive £48k for improving leisure facilities in the parish. Last year in response to a questionnaire, the parish residents identified a desire for a multi-use-sports-court to be provided, the total cost for which is estimated at £80k. So the difference is being built up as a reserve through the precept. Additionally as our OCC grass cutting grant has been halved this year then this must be met through the precept in order to maintain the same level of service.

Having covered the most important topics I now turn to the most talked about topic: potholes. Approximately once a year some members of the Parish Council together with representatives from OCC Highways undertake a 'Parish Walk' to identify road problems. In fact we actually do this by car rather than on foot. However throughout the year anybody can report a pothole by going online to FixMyStreet on the County Council website. Of course the Parish Council also reports problem as they occur or if a resident does not have internet access.

Although not in our Parish we were pleased to see that six lorry drivers were fined a total of £2,500 for flouting the 18ton weight limit at Newbridge. This is important to us as should the weight limit be further lowered due to damage to this 14th century bridge, there could well be an increase in traffic through our Parish.

I would like to thank our two District Councillors, Hillary Fenton and Steve Good, for their continuous support in the work done by the Parish Council. It is certainly a bonus that both live in the Parish. I would similarly also like to thank our District Councillor, Charles Mathew, for his support and who again managed to fund half of the cost for the replacement of the outer posts at the War Memorial from his 'community fund'.

And finally, a reminder that the Parish Council meets on the first Thursday of each month at 7.30pm in the new committee room of the Village Hall. At this meeting there is an agenda item where residents are welcome to share their views on local issues. Please remember, however, that this June meeting will be on the Wednesday.

If you can't make the meetings then the Minutes of the meetings are published on the village website, you can also find us on Twitter and Parish Council News is published in Voices."

Q: What is Thames Water going to do to improve sewerage and water supply in the parish, which is on the cusp of capacity. The sewage pumping stations fail regularly.

A: The Parish Council is very aware of this issue. Every time that the Parish Council comments on a planning application for new dwellings, we point out that the sewerage system is at capacity and cannot cope with additional waste. The proposal for the West Waddy site is that the new homes will not be connected to mains sewerage. The Parish Council will make this point again very strongly when it responds to the new application from Gladman. One of the problems is that for sites for fewer than 10 new homes, Thames Water is not required to comment, and WODC is not necessarily concerned about sewerage and water issues if Thames Water doesn't comment. The Parish Council has also written to WODC to express concern about the cumulative impact of smaller developments on sewerage and other infrastructure issues. WODC recognises these concerns, but is limited in what it can do legally for smaller developments. The Parish Council will keep making the same point about sewerage and water until there are improvements to the whole infrastructure.

Q: If a stand-alone waste water plant is installed on the West Waddy site as proposed, then we assume that the cleaned water will discharge into the ditch which runs from Bull Street towards Cote. This ditch is already full at certain times of the year, so how will it cope with additional water from the development?

A: The Parish Council is aware of this, and has made the point to WODC, but the final decisions on planning applications rest with WODC.

A: Hilary Fenton (WODC Councillor): There was someone outside Westfield House recently investigating a manhole. When asked what they were doing, they said that they were putting a monitor on the waste pipe, but wouldn't say why and for whom.

A: Richard Haines: In the Gladman planning information it says that they are asking Thames Water to comment, so it might be to inform this.

Q: Sewerage is the responsibility of Thames Water, not the District Council. Thames Water has a legal responsibility to dispose of waste water. They need to upgrade the pipe.

A: Richard Haines: You are quite right, this is a Thames Water issue. All the Parish Council can do is continue to lobby WODC to put pressure on Thames Water.

Q: Has West Waddy gone back to WODC with more detail on their proposals for the Cote Road site?

A: No full planning application has been submitted for the site yet. When it is, it will be subject to the formal planning process, with public consultation.

Q: Will letters about the Gladman planning application be sent to households in the village?

A: No, normally only adjacent land owners are informed directly; otherwise it is just advertised by a site notice and on the WODC website.

Richard Haines told the meeting that the Parish Council will consider the Gladman application at the June meeting and will submit its own response to WODC after hearing any input from the public at that meeting. However, Mr Haines encouraged as many people as possible to respond/object direct to WODC if that is how they feel. The WODC Planning Committee is impacted by the strength of local feeling.

Q: How much credence is given to the public view when WODC determines planning applications?

A: Richard Haines: I had always been sceptical until I became involved as a representative of the Parish Council on the applications for Thistle Cottage. I attended the Lowlands Committee meetings at which the applications were considered and outlined the view of the Parish Council. At these meetings the parties who wish to speak are allotted three minutes (strictly applied). This includes the developer, the Parish Council and the public (one representative from the public). The officer recommendation was for approval. I outlined concerns the Parish Council had about parking in particular, and when the plans were discussed by the Committee members, they resolved that the application would only be approved if it was changed to increase the amount of on-site parking. The final decision was directly affected by the Parish Council input. The Parish Council supported the concept of development, but wanted there to be more on-site parking to reduce the risk of people parking on Ham Lane.

Q: What about all the trees on the site that have been cut down?

A: The tree report prepared for the site showed that the ones which have been cut down had little value and were self-sown. The ones of value have been retained and more trees will be planted.

Q: It is already difficult to exit Ham Lane by car because of the phone box and the amount of cars parked on The Square and the High Street.

A: During the building phase the construction management plan will control the traffic movements associated with the construction. The Parish Council has expressed concern to Oxfordshire County Council about the impact of the phone box on the visual splay. BT has been asked whether the box could be removed, but have said that their legal obligations prevent them from doing this because the next nearest kiosk is almost 2400m away.

Q: The key change in planning legislation is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, with planning authorities needing to demonstrate an adequate land supply. Has WODC met the required land supply?

A: Hilary Fenton: The new Local Plan is in draft form and will be submitted to the inspector with a target delivery of 525 new homes per year.

A: Richard Haines: One of the issues is that the Plan is still draft and has not yet been accepted by the Inspector. There is therefore a great onus on WODC to resist developers and stand by the 525 homes target. This is below the figure contained in the Strategic

Housing Market Assessment, and whilst the Plan is in draft form, developers are attacking the target which WODC has resolved to include in the Plan.

A: Charles Mathew: There is also a wider issue arising from Oxford City Council. The City says it can't meet its housing requirement and is therefore expecting the districts to take a share of the additional homes it will be required to provide. There are arguments and discussions to be had around this, but this issue could ultimately impact the housing targets which the districts have to deliver.

Q: In relation to speeding, could traffic calming like the chicanes which there are in Bampton be installed in Aston?

A: Charles Mathew: It would be quite difficult to persuade Oxfordshire County Council to pay for traffic calming. A new chicane has been installed in Stanton Harcourt, but this had to be paid for locally (£12.5k). People could include this issue as part of their response to the Gladman planning application.

Q: Could the 30mph zone be extended to cover the gap between Aston & Cote?

A: The Parish Council has asked for this to be considered before, but we were told that it would not be possible as the gap is not "built up."

Q: Could we get a better sign warning drivers of the proximity of the playground – maybe one which lights up? The current sign is quite small (and is twisted round at the moment).

A: We would have to find the funds locally. The Parish Council could look into this.

A: The Parish Council does find it difficult to get Oxfordshire County Council to take any action, including on turning signs round so that they are visible when they have been hit by a vehicle.

Q: How many people live in Aston?

A: There are 440 households.

Q: So if we wanted to fund traffic calming locally we could go round collecting funds from each household, and this wouldn't amount to much each.

A: The Parish Council is always happy for the community to get directly involved to finding solutions to matters of concern.

Q: Will the 30mph zone be extended if the Gladman development is built?

A: People could include this point as part of their response to the planning application.

7. West Oxfordshire District Council - Councillor Hilary Fenton

Mrs Fenton said that she would outline the WODC committees she sits on and look forward to talk about how she can help the community rather than just focusing on looking over the past year. The Economic and Social Overview Committee looks at issues like the speed of ambulance response, doctors and leisure centres. The Committee has recently been asked to look in detail at the operation of the two leisure centres in Witney and Carterton. The Committee has also dealt with concerns about the way in which a GP surgery in Witney was being run. Mrs Fenton stressed that the Committee only knows what residents are concerned about if they contact WODC.

Mrs Fenton told the meeting that she sits on the Lowlands Planning Committee. Due to her membership of this Committee, whilst she is always very happy to hear what people think about planning applications, she cannot actually express her own opinion as she must ensure that she doesn't prejudice herself before the application is discussed and determined at a Planning Committee meeting. Mrs Fenton stressed that the attendance of members of the public at Planning Committee meetings does have a huge impact, whether they actually ask to speak or not – just by members of the public attending the meeting the Committee can

gauge the strength of local concerns. Whilst the Committee has to determine applications on the basis of planning law, strong public opinion can sway the final decision. The District Council is very high up the list of local authorities on recycling rates. WODC makes a lot of money from recycling, which helps keep the council tax low.

Mrs Fenton ended by saying that she is here to help, and is happy to receive direct contact from members of the public by phone, email, letter or in person.

Q: As you are on the Planning Committee, please do not allow people to build on the flood plain. This affects people who have lived in their homes for a long time without problems. WODC has come very close to making bad decisions recently.

A: Mrs Fenton agreed with the concerns expressed.

Q: Why can't you express your view on local planning applications? If you are our representative on the Committee, then I want to know what you think.

A: There was an explanation given by various people on the fact that although Mrs Fenton is a member of the Lowlands Planning Committee and represents our parish on the District Council in general, she isn't actually directly representing our parish on the Planning Committee. The issue of pre-determination was explained, which means that no member of the Planning Committee can be seen to have made their own mind up about a planning application before it is discussed by the full Planning Committee at which the application is determined.

8. Oxfordshire County Council – Councillor Charles Mathew

Mr Mathew started by saying that at the moment, the answer Oxfordshire County Council gives to any request is “we have no money.” The County Council’s financial situation is extremely frustrating for all the County Councillors, and Mr Mathew said that he thinks that the County Council has made some misguided spending decisions in recent years.

Mr Mathew said that he sees one part of his role as working with parish councils to ensure that there is a level playing field between Oxfordshire County Council and local residents. He said that he needs support to do this properly and called upon residents to contact him with any issues they may have. The more evidence he receives that shows where the major concerns are, the more pressure he can put on Oxfordshire County Council to do something. This includes matters in relation to Highways (potholes, road crossings, and traffic calming). It took 18 months to get agreement for a new crossing to be installed outside Bartholomew School in Eynsham, and even then this was only achieved because the school provided half of the funding.

Mr Mathew went on to say that one of his key concerns remains gravel extraction. A lot of progress has been made over the past year on making sure that the new Minerals Local Plan will be more reasonable – the split in extraction between the north and the south of the river Thames had previously been 76% north and 24% south; the new plan contains a 50/50 split, which is supposed to reflect usage. Whilst this doesn't in fact reflect usage (which is going to be concentrated in the south of the county), it is at least an improvement. The worst aspect of the new plan is the targets for extraction that have been included. The overall target is 1.15 million tonnes of sand and gravel a year, despite the last declared production figure being only 402,000 tonnes, so the target seems extremely excessive. An application to extend the site at Gill Mill (Ducklington) has recently been agreed, which will generate 5 million tonnes of sand and gravel. This means that 90% of the target for Oxfordshire can/will be met by West Oxfordshire, so even when the new draft Plan contains a 50/50 split, the County Council is making decisions which go against its own Plan.

Waste, education, highways, fire and rescue are all Oxfordshire County Council concerns. The issue of the A40 is a major concern. Mr Mathew explained that he is keen that a digital payment mechanism for the toll on the Swinford bridge is introduced. A study has shown that this would reduce the delays caused by the manual payment mechanism by 72%. However, the County Council currently seems too concerned that too much traffic would be diverted from the A40 to pursue this.

The County Council currently seems keen on installing new park and ride sites outside Oxford, including one at the top of Witney Road on the A40 near Eynsham. Mr Mathew expressed the view that this would not be attractive to people wanting to travel to Oxford as they would then only be sitting in a traffic queue in a bus rather than in their own car. Mr Mathew said that he thinks that the whole issue of the transport infrastructure needs to be approached from a new angle. Oxfordshire County Council talks about creating alternative transport mechanisms, but the talks don't translate into action because "we've got no money."

Mr Mathew concluded by saying that there are many good points about the County Council, but it is difficult to make the improvements that residents expect.

Q: Where has the County Council been misguided in spending its money?

A: There have been enormous improvements over the past 5 years. However, I have been telling the County Council that they need to increase income generation and make better use of their property assets. I have been trying to persuade them to spend some of the pension funds in liaison with property developers to use land owned by OCC to build the sort of housing which is required by the market – this would introduce OCC onto the property market, which other councils are already doing and generating money from. Some councils are 95% funded from money they generate themselves, and it is essential that the County Council moves in this direction.

Q: Would this not be a conflict of interest? The County Council would then be acting commercially, but is required to be protecting the public interest, including from developers who would be seeking to do the same thing that you are suggesting the County Council should do?

A: The County Council has to meet a lot of statutory obligations, and is getting towards the position where it will only have the money it needs to meet its legal obligations in relation to children and older people. Currently 68% of OCC's money goes on meeting these obligations, and it is predicted that this will increase to 90%. If this happens, then all of the other services which aren't a legal obligation but which are currently subsidised, like transport, that people expect OCC to provide, will not be able to continue. That is the pressure and why OCC must ensure that it benefits from the assets it has.

Q: Is there any progress on doing the work on the A40 Shores Green junction to open it up to four way traffic?

A: This is dependent on obtaining s106 funding from building development in that location which hasn't yet been agreed, so there has been no progress on extending the junction.

Q: The road alterations at Station Lane in Witney have been a significant improvement.

A: Yes.

9. Other matters raised by members of the public

Q: Who is running the action group looking at buying the Red Lion?

A: At the Parish Council meeting at which this was discussed, the current landlord and another local resident said they would take this issue forward.

Someone said that the landlord has recently announced publicly in the pub that his offer to buy the pub as a private going concern has been accepted.

10. Close of Meeting

Richard Haines thanked everyone for coming and for participating in the meeting which closed at 9.30pm.

Signed dated.....

DRAFT