

**MINUTES OF ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY PARISH COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 5TH MARCH 2015 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
 Jane West
 Phil West

In Attendance: Helen Sandhu – Clerk
 Hilary Fenton, West Oxfordshire District Councillor
 Charles Mathew, Oxfordshire County Councillor
 5 members of the public

Apologies: None

2. Minutes of previous meeting – on 5 February 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Proposed by Paul Sparrowhawk, seconded by Jane Everex.

3. Parish Councillors – Disclosure of interests on agenda items

John Ordish, as Treasurer and church warden of St James' Church, Aston, their request for a donation towards the cost of grass cutting – item 7b.

4. Meeting open for public debate

4 of the members of the public present indicated that they had come to the meeting to express their concerns about the proposed development adjacent to Foxwood in Aston, information about which had been circulated to local households by Gladman Developments. One particular concern was whether development on this land would make the fields adjacent to it more vulnerable to development, including the area of land at the rear of the proposed development site, shown on the provisional plans as “amenity land.”

Hilary Fenton said that residents are free to email/write to all the members of the Lowlands Planning Committee direct with their concerns, and Charles Mathew said that he can be contacted on matters associated with the provisional development which would come under the remit of the County Council (including roads, school, sewerage).

The residents were encouraged to respond to the pre-application consultation by Gladman Developments, and were further encouraged to respond individually to West Oxfordshire District Council if/when a formal planning application is submitted.

4 members of the public left the meeting.

Jane Everex asked what is happening about the unsatisfactory culvert repair on the Great Brook midmost culvert. The Clerk said that the last email from the County Council on this matter had been received on 16 October 2014, in which Andrew Vidovic, the Senior Engineer responsible for bridges at the County Council had said that “I will now escalate the matter and when I am able to do so, come back to you.”

Charles Mathew asked the Clerk to forward this email to him, and said that he would pursue the matter.

5. District and County Council matters

Charles Mathew said that the County Council is now reviewing its decision to abolish the post of Chief Executive.

The Bullfinch report (the investigation into child sexual exploitation in Oxfordshire between 1999 and 2014) has been published, and the County Council is dealing with the impact of this and continuing to take measures to ensure that the recommendations are fully considered and acted upon.

The County Council is continuing to slowly pursue the possibility of moving towards a form of unitary structure of local government, and is seeking to increase the amount of collaborative working with other councils.

Mr Mathew said that he had attended a useful seminar on methods of maintaining grass verges to encourage biodiversity.

Hilary Fenton spoke on matters relating to the District Council, and reported that the Council has now approved the draft Local Development Framework which will ultimately be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination. The Framework contains helpful provisions to encourage some self-build, the development of low cost housing, and money for infrastructure.

6. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

a) *Second community defibrillator*

John Ordish said that this will be installed on either 16 or 17 March.

b) *Central Aston post box*

The Clerk contacted Royal Mail to ask when the box will be moved and it transpired that Royal Mail had lost the paperwork and so hadn't started the process for its relocation.

Richard Haines and John Ordish are now due to meet with the Royal Mail officer again on 10 March, and hopefully the relocation will be expedited due to Royal Mail's error. Richard Haines said that he has informed the former post mistress of the reasons for the delay.

c) *BT payphone at entrance to Ham Lane*

The Clerk informed the parish council that a Highways officer has visited the location and confirms the Parish Council view that "visibility is far from ideal." The officer advises that to improve the situation, the road markings at the Ham Lane junction (the "give way" markings) could be brought further forward, but this would also involve moving the centre line of the main road. The officer advises that to do this would involve using specialist equipment at a significant hire cost, which would be difficult to justify if there have been no actual accidents (just near misses). Highways has no record of accidents at this location. The Highways Officer is attempting to contact BT Openreach to discuss the issue with them.

d) *Conifer hedge bordering North Street, Aston*

The occupier of the farm has cut the hedge back from the road.

e) *County Council proposal of unitary government structure for Oxfordshire, and response of the District Councils*

It was resolved to write to Oxfordshire County Council stating that our parish council would want to preserve the current three-tier structure of local government, and would not wish to see a move towards a unitary structure. Our parish council is more confident that local issues, particularly planning, will be managed better by retaining a local district council, rather than by having all issues managed centrally in Oxford. The

Matters Arising from Previous Meetings (continued)

members of West Oxfordshire District Council have a good understanding of the issues faced by communities living in rural west Oxfordshire, and we would not want to lose that. The letter will be copied to the leader of West Oxfordshire District Council and Hilary Fenton and Steve Good, our District Councillors.

f) Anti Social Behaviour

The Parish Council has been contacted by a local resident expressing concern at a recent incident of anti-social behaviour outside the school, when the children were returning home. A tractor was being driven in an inconsiderate and potentially dangerous manner, and the driver was observed using inappropriate language in the presence of children leaving the school.

The Clerk said that she has already acknowledged the contact from the resident, and has asked them to report the incident direct to the neighbourhood police team.

It was agreed that the Clerk will also contact the police on behalf of the Parish Council to ask them to provide an occasional presence outside the school at drop-off/pick-up times.

7. New Business

a) Half yearly review of external Parish Council assets

John Ordish volunteered to carry out this review.

b) To consider a request for a donation towards the maintenance of the churchyard at St James' Church for 2014

It was resolved to give the requested donation of £600 – proposed by Jane West, seconded by Paul Sparrowhawk.

c) Protocol on pre application meetings

A draft protocol had been circulated in the Clerk's Briefing Notes. It was resolved to adopt the protocol – proposed by Jane West, seconded by John Ordish. The protocol will be published on the Parish Council website.

d) Cote Baptist Chapel – grass cutting regime for 2015

The letter and other information received from Historic Churches Trust had been circulated in the Clerk's Briefing Notes. HCT is proposing to trim the grass at the front of the chapel once a month between April and October, with the maintenance of the gravel path and the churchyard at the rear of the chapel to be carried out by volunteers. It was resolved that the Parish Council is in agreement with the proposed regime in principle, provided HCT finds volunteers to carry out the work to be done on a voluntary basis, and that the gravel path in particular is well maintained. Letter to be sent to HCT.

e) Aston & Cote Primary school maypole

A thank you letter from the school for the contribution towards the maypole which the Parish Council paid in June 2013 had been sent direct to Richard Haines as Chairman of the Parish Council. The letter was put in the folder for circulation amongst councillors. The Head Teacher has invited representative(s) of the Parish Council to go into school on a Tuesday or Wednesday during May or June to watch the children practice their maypole dancing. Richard Haines said that he would aim to attend on one occasion and would liaise directly with the school to agree a date. Mr Haines invited the other councillors to consider attending with him. The Clerk to inform the school.

New Business (continued)

f) Red Lion public house, Aston

Listed by the property agent as to be put up for sale by public auction as a going concern on 11 March 2015. Paul Sparrowhawk said that he believes that the pub has now been removed from this sale and that the current landlord is seeking to purchase it.

g) Connecting Oxfordshire – Local Transport Plan 2015- 2031 – Oxfordshire County Council consultation

The hard copy of the consultation was placed in the folder for circulation. A response, if any, to be agreed at the next Parish Council meeting.

h) Invitation to Community Information Network meeting on Wednesday 18 March at 10.00am in Eynsham Village Hall

No-one available to attend. The Clerk was asked to find out more information about what the network does and how parish councils can help.

8. Community Trust

The draft minutes of the last Community Trust meeting were put in the folder.

9. Parish Infrastructure

a) Replacement of remaining wooden posts on war memorial green

The work has now been completed.

b) Repositioning of bench on war memorial green

In hand – c/f.

c) Damaged sign at turn of Chimney and Cote

Reported to Highways.

d) Damaged sign at Isle of Wight bridge turn (from Bampton-Buckland Road)

Two arms are now missing from the wooden sign. The Clerk will report to Highways when she has been able to photograph it.

10. PLANNING

Gladman Developments proposed residential development on Cote Road, Aston

There was a general discussion about the Parish Council's concerns about developments being proposed on sites outside the built-envelope of Aston, and the cumulative impact on the sewerage system in particular of an increase in housing.

It was resolved that the Parish Council would respond to the pre-application consultation to advise that it opposes development outside the built-envelope of the village, and is concerned about the cumulative impact of development in Aston, given that there are several other sites for new housing which have already obtained approval from WODC. The response will also express the Parish Council's view that the pre-application consultation approach adopted by Gladman Developments is inadequate, in that they have done a postal consultation only, and have declined to attend a Parish Council meeting or to hold an independent public consultation meeting.

The letter will be copied to WODC Councillors Hilary Fenton and Steve Good.

PLANNING (continued)

Thistle Cottage site

A resident of Ham Lane had copied the Parish Council into his correspondence with WODC in which he had expressed concern about the removal of the trees on the site. The WODC officer had informed him that the work has been carried out on the terms agreed with WODC, and that the Lowlands Planning Committee meeting at which the approval for the development had been granted had agreed that more trees could be removed from the site in order to improve the parking provision.

11. Finance

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

Balance on Current Account at 28 February 2015 £ 9,253.56
 Balance on Deposit Account at 28 February 2015 £16,773.89

b) Statement of Internal Control and Annual Review of Effectiveness of Internal Control

In order to assist the Parish Council with their annual review of the effectiveness of the internal control system the Clerk had recirculated the Parish Council’s Statement of Internal Control in the Clerk’s Briefing Notes.

The Parish Council resolved to readopt this Statement and members confirmed that they are satisfied with the internal control procedures being followed – proposed by John Ordish, seconded by Jane West.

c) February invoices presented for approval and payment

		Statute
Clerk’s salary and working from home allowance	355.80	LGA 1972, s112
Clerk’s expenses – printing – 54 sheets @ 5p	2.70	LGA 1972 s111
Margaret Johnson – stationery & copying	20.33	LGA 1972 s111
Information Commissioner – annual data protection registration renewal	35.00	LGA 1972 s111
MTS Fencing – installation of posts on war memorial green	750.00	WM (LAP) Act 1923 s1 &3
West Oxfordshire District Council – grass cut in June 2014 missed off earlier invoices and autumn planting, less discount of £50 + VAT as posts were not treated	533.84	HA 1980, s116
West Oxfordshire District Council – emptying of dog bin in March	20.40	Litter Act 1983
St James’ Church, Aston – donation towards cost of grass cutting in 2014	600.00	LGA 1972 s214
Total	£2,318.07	

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

12. Parish Councillors’ reports from meetings attended since last meeting

Richard Haines informed the Parish Council that he had attended a meeting of the RAF Brize Norton Local Consultation Working Group on 9 February 2015. He put a copy of the minutes of the meeting in the folder; they are also available online on the RAF BN website.

**13. Matters arising since publication of agenda/
Matters which Councillors wish to raise for inclusion on next agenda
(for discussion only)**

The Clerk informed the Parish Council that Bob Jones is organising another community litter blitz between 6 – 18 April and is seeking volunteers. Clerk to forward the email to councillors, and anyone able to help to contact Mr Jones direct.

John Ordish had received a letter from one of the students (a school council member) of Aston & Cote Primary School requesting a donation from the Parish Council towards the cost of the Life Education Bus. It was agreed that the letter needs to be endorsed by a representative of the school management team, which should be sent direct to the Clerk. John Ordish agreed to follow this issue up with the teacher who had delivered the letter to him.

The Clerk was asked to write to Carolyn Simmonds to formally invite representative(s) of the Community Trust to make a presentation on the Sport Aston project at the Annual Parish Meeting on 19 May.

14. Date of next meeting: Thursday 2 April 2015, 7.30pm
Monthly Parish Council Meeting

John Ordish gave his apologies for this meeting.

Signeddated.....