

**MINUTES OF ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY PARISH COUNCIL  
MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2016 IN THE  
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  
                                  Charles Mathew – Oxfordshire County Councillor, arriving at item 6  
                                  1 member of the public until the end of item 2

**Members’**

**Apologies:**                None

**2. Meeting open for public debate**

The member of the public present said that he had come to express concern about the temporary hoarding and public verge at the development at Thistle Cottage on Ham Lane. He reminded the Parish Council of the history of the hoarding and that Oxfordshire County Council had granted permission for it up to January 2016. He expressed concern about the potential for the highway verge not to be reinstated to its full previous width and reminded the Parish Council that there had been some confusion about the boundary of the site. The developer had previously asserted that the site boundary ended at the metalled road edge, although this had been challenged by Oxfordshire Highways who have confirmed that there is a width of public (previously grassed) verge between the site and the metalled road. The member of the public said that if the verge is not reinstated to its full width, then the bend on the site boundary will be made sharper and this could present a hazard.

Richard Haines told the meeting that the Parish Council has been copied into emails between the member of the public and Highways about the renewal of the hoarding licence and the position of the highways boundary. Mr Haines said that the historic position of the boundary and the existence of the verge between the site boundary and the metalled road is clearly visible on Google Maps. He reminded the meeting that the cottages fronting Ham Lane will have driveway access and parking at the front. The current temporary fencing is open and provides good visibility during the build. The County Council is expected to renew the temporary hoarding licence to cover the rest of the build period.

The Parish Council agreed that it is important that the boundary of the site is reinstated to its original position when the development is completed. It was agreed that the Parish Council would write to Highways to express concern about the future position of the boundary, pointing out that whilst the temporary fencing is currently positioned at the edge of the road, this must not be accepted as the boundary of the site when the work is complete and reminding Highways to ensure that the full historic verge is reinstated. A copy of the communication to be sent to the WODC Planning Officer.

The member of the public left the meeting.

3. **Minutes of previous meeting** – on 3 December 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Proposed by Paul Sparrowhawk, seconded by Jane West.

4. **Parish Councillors – Disclosure of interests on agenda items**

None

5. **Matters Arising from Previous Meetings**

**a) *Oxfordshire County Council proposal to withdraw all bus subsidies (including both services 18 and 19 through Aston and Cote)***

After the December meeting letters were sent to County Councillors Ian Hudspeth, David Nimmo-Smith, local MP David Cameron and the Planning Department at WODC as requested.

No replies/responses have been received from Councillors Hudspeth and Nimmo-Smith.

David Cameron has provided a response in which he agrees that buses are essential, outlines the funding provided by the Government for bus services, acknowledges that all local authorities need to cut costs and states “I am encouraging the OCC (sic) to follow the best practice of Conservative councils from across the country by protecting frontline services.”

The Planning Policy Manager at WODC states that the availability of public transport is only one of a number of measures used to assess whether an area where new development is proposed is sustainable. Aston is currently assessed as a medium sized village, “capable of accommodating additional growth.” Changes to public transport and any other services will be fed into the next review of the settlement sustainability report for the parish (no indication of the timescale for this). The potential withdrawal of public transport services will not affect the planning position of the two large schemes on Cote Road which have already received outline planning approval.

The Clerk told the Parish Council that she has received information from Oxfordshire County Council inviting local councils to meet with the operator of the bus services which would be impacted by the withdrawal of the subsidy. Richard Haines and Phil West agreed to attend the meeting with Stagecoach to discuss services 18 and 19. The Clerk will email the other Parish Councils on route 19 who would have no bus service if the 19 is withdrawn (Ducklington, Bampton and Clanfield) and also Standlake to ask if they intend to send a representative to the meeting with Stagecoach and to enquire about their views on the potential withdrawal of the subsidy.

**b) *Aston & Cote Community Trust insurances***

The Community Trust has provided a copy of their insurances as requested; this was put in the folder for review by councillors.

**c) *West Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan***

The Planning Inspector has published his initial findings following the Local Plan examination held in November.

The Inspector has raised concerns about the proposed housing target (indicating that he does not agree with the WODC target of 10,500 new homes over the period of the plan to 2031.

“1.2 I conclude in this Note that the housing requirement in the submitted local plan of 10,500 dwellings is not justified and has not been derived from a process which complies with the requirements of the NPPF. Accordingly,

**Matters Arising from Previous Meetings (continued)**

further work is required which, if the Council wishes to proceed, will mean a suspension of the Examination.”

The Inspector quotes from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) commissioned by the combined Oxfordshire councils which came up with a target of 13,200 homes for West Oxfordshire over the plan period. The Inspector doesn't suggest an acceptable target, but it will be above 10,500:

“10.5 I am unable to identify what the housing requirement should be. It is likely to be between the recommended figure in the SHMA (660dpa) and that in the plan (525dpa).”

In addition to this, the Inspector states that WODC must do further work to assess what contribution the district will need to make to support Oxford City with its unmet housing need (which will push the target up further).

The second hearing which was scheduled to take place in February 2016 has now been postponed to allow WODC to carry out further work on the draft Plan.

- d) *Anti-social behaviour*  
None.

**6. Oxfordshire County Council**

Charles Mathew arrived at the meeting.

Mr Mathew told the Parish Council that he is trying to arrange a meeting for Northmoor, Stanton Harcourt and Standlake Parish Councils to discuss a combined approach to the potential withdrawal of the subsidy for bus service 18 and the future of the service, in advance of the meeting with the bus operator. Richard Haines said he would be happy to attend the joint meeting if he is available.

Mr Mathew told the Parish Council that the County Council had budgeted for £50 million in cuts, but will now need to find further savings of £20 million following the Local Government Finance Settlement. Some of these savings will be achieved by bringing forward some future savings that had already been earmarked, but this will still leave £12.2 million to find. The County Council is now looking into introducing fines to enforce proper use of the dedicated Park & Ride road lanes and is seriously looking at a congestion charge for Oxford.

Mr Mathew confirmed that the County Council will be applying to Government to increase council tax by the additional 2% for spending on social care.

Mr Mathew was asked about the level of the County Council's cash reserves. Mr Mathew said that if the school reserves and ringfenced reserves are excluded, the County Council holds “free” reserves of £13 million. On turnover of £499 million per annum, this level of reserve is very low, covering only 10 days' expenditure.

**7. New Business**

- a) *Grass cutting contract – Aston playing field*

The tenders received were opened and considered. It was resolved to award the contract to Des Johnston at a cost of £72 per cut.

- b) *Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme – public drop in event*

The Environment Agency and its partners in the scheme are running a public drop in event on Tuesday 19 January 2016 in Oxford Town Hall (between 2.30pm and 7pm). The event aims to provide an update on proposals for the route of the alleviation channel around Oxford.

Questions were raised about the second stage of the scheme which the Environment Agency had presented to the parish at the Annual Parish Meeting in 2009. The second

stage covered the use of farmland around Aston, Cote and Shifford to “hold back” excess water (in effect flooding the fields) in periods of extreme rainfall. The Environment Agency had said that further consideration of this stage would be made once the channel around Oxford had been built and was functioning effectively. No further information has been received since then, but plans to construct the channel around Oxford are moving forward.

John Ordish said that he would ask the Environment Agency representative for an update at the next meeting of the Bampton Flood Working Party.

**c) *Formal Consultation on creation of second disabled person’s parking place on Cote Road (in layby outside number 28)***

It was resolved that the Parish Council would not object.

**d) *County Council Mobile Library Service***

OCC has informed the Parish Council that for some time there has been little or no use of the two mobile library stops in the parish. The County Council is intending to provide posters to promote the service, but has warned that “should this level of use continue...we will have to discontinue the visits.” It is to be noted that the County Council is currently proposing to cancel the mobile library service from April 2016 as part of the budget cuts in any case.

**e) *To consider a request for a donation from Volunteer Link Up (West Oxfordshire)***

It was resolved that the Council, in accordance with its powers under sections 137 and 139 of the Local Government Act 1972, would pay a donation of £135 to Volunteer Link-Up. This is, in the opinion of the Council, in the interests of the inhabitants of the Parish and will benefit them in a manner commensurate with the expenditure.

Proposed by John Ordish, seconded by Jane West.

**8. Community Trust**

A copy of the November meeting minutes was put in the folder.

John Ordish told the Parish Council that an additional meeting had been held in December to discuss a request from Sport Aston to hold an open air music festival at the village hall in 2016. The Community Trust had decided that they needed more information and to carry out further research, including on the legality of charging people to access the field before making a final decision. The earliest an event like this could take place would be in 2017.

**9. Parish Infrastructure**

**a) *Village maintenance***

John Ordish expressed concern about the volume of wet leaves in the road which are blocking the drainage gutters. The Clerk agreed to contact WODC to ask when the road sweeper is next due to visit the village.

**b) *Access to Cote Road postbox (at junction with Bull Street)***

Oddjobs has advised that two pavement slabs could be installed at a cost of £50-£60. It was resolved to order this work.

**c) *Pedestrian metal bridge over Great Brook from/to footpath to Ham Lane***

The OCC bridge engineer has provided the following update: “The instruction for the design activity has now been given and will be picked up in the new year. The design team will inevitably be visiting the site early next year and I will ask them to provide a visual assessment on the bridge’s current condition and whether we can cope with the structure in its current condition or whether the risk is too great to ignore and have no other choice and to close the route at this point.”

**Parish Infrastructure (continued)**

- d) *Metal chicanes/barriers at footpath ends – Woodbridge Close, Cote Road, Bull Street*  
The County Council has been provided with detailed measurements for the two chicanes which will require remedial work to improve their accessibility to people with mobility issues and has been informed that the Parish Council is happy for a further two chicanes to be completely removed. Response/costings awaited.

**10. PLANNING**

**Planning applications granted**

- 15/03524/HHD 8 Waites Close, Aston  
Erection of single storey rear extension

**11. FINANCE**

- a) *Account Balances at 31December* - noted.
- b) *Bank reconciliations at 28 December* – noted.
- c) *Receipts & payments statement for 9 months to 31 December* – noted.
- d) *Budget and precept for 2016/17*  
A second draft of the budget had been circulated in the Clerk’s Briefing Notes. It was noted that the budget expenditure would need to be increased by £105 to incorporate the quotation for the grass cutting of the playing field. It was resolved to accept the budget as presented with the £105 increase, giving revenue expenditure of £24,881 (including a contingency budget of £5,000) and non-precept income of £1,159. It was resolved to set the total precept at £25,815 (including the Council Tax Support Grant) for 2016/17.  
It was further resolved that the expected surplus at the end of 2015/16 would be added to the recreation reserve.  
Proposed by John Ordish, seconded by Phil West.

- e) *December invoices presented for approval and payment*

		Statute
Clerk’s salary - H Sandhu £354.20, working from home allowance of £10.00	364.20	LGA 1972, s112
Clerk’s expenses – printing – 209 sheets @ 5p	10.45	LGA 1972 s111
Margaret Johnson Ltd – photocopying & stationery	12.06	LGA 1972 s111
West Oxfordshire District Council – emptying of dog bin in December 2015 & January 2016	42.08	Litter Act 1983
Volunteer Link-Up (West Oxon) donation	135.00	LGA 1972 s137
<b>Total</b>	<b>£563.79</b>	

It was resolved to make the above payments – proposed by Jane West, seconded by Paul Sparrowhawk.

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

John Ordish said that he had recently attended a meeting of the Bampton Flood Working Group and that he would provide an update once he has received the minutes.

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

**Matters which Councillors wish to raise for inclusion on next agenda  
(for discussion only)**

Richard Haines told the Parish Council that an article has been included in the next edition of Voices written by Steve Good, in which he raises the question of whether the front part of the allotment site on Cote Road should be converted into a car park. It was noted that this is a suggestion which would need to be raised with the Aston & Cote Allotments Charity who own the land and are entirely separate from the Parish Council.

John Ordish said that two members of the public have expressed concern to him about the potholes on the small cul-de-sac on Cote Road. Mr Ordish said that he will go out on site to check them and will report them to Oxfordshire Highways if they appear to meet their repair criteria.

Signed .....dated.....