

# **ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY PARISH COUNCIL**

## **CLERK'S BRIEFING NOTES**

### **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING ON 5 MARCH 2015**

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Prepared by Helen Sandhu  
28 February 2015

**Correspondence sent since 5 February 2015**

- a) Letter to WODC planning department about cumulative impact of developments of fewer than 10 homes on small communities
- b) Letter to Volunteer Link-up enclosing donation

## **ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY PARISH COUNCIL**

### Protocol on pre application meetings for major developments Guidance for councillors and developers

Adopted on xxx

#### Preamble

Aston, Cote, Shifford & Chimney Parish Council recognises that pre-application discussions play an important role in major planning applications, and welcomes the desire of many developers to consult both the council and the public more widely. However the council is also aware of the importance of public perception in planning and the critical need to avoid any appearance that the council is conducting secretive negotiations or colluding with developers.

#### Pre-determination

In all meetings with developers members are reminded of the critical importance of not pre-determining their position on any future application, as this could require them to take no part in the discussion. It is noted however that expressing a pre-disposition, for example of either 'welcome in principle' or 'concerns', is permissible.

#### Individual members' discussions

Individual members may be approached by developers for informal discussions of possible future applications. Whilst it is left to the individual judgement of members whether to take part in such discussions, based on the nature and likely level of controversy of the application, they are advised:

- i. To carefully consider the public perception of such meetings.
- ii. To avoid any appearance of collusion in applications likely to cause controversy.
- iii. To avoid accepting hospitality in connection with such meetings.
- iv. To advise the Chairman, and where possible the council, of such meetings

Members must not purport to be representing the council at such meetings, unless expressly authorised to do so by the council.

#### Pre application briefings

The council is, in general, willing to hold meetings with developers prior to public consultation on the following two conditions:

- i. Full public consultation is either already scheduled or firmly planned.
- ii. The meeting is open to the public to attend and has been reasonably advertised.

The policy of the council is not to hold private meetings with developers unless there is a necessary and compelling reason that could be justified to the public (for example a strong commercial sensitivity, where a developer wishes to receive an initial steer before deciding whether to progress).

#### Pre application public consultations

The council strongly encourages developers to carry out full public consultation before submitting plans for major developments, on the following basis:

- i. An accessible and convenient venue.
- ii. Sufficient publicity to likely interested parties, in good time.
- iii. Appropriate timings to allow as wide a range of people as possible to attend.
- iv. A genuinely open mind and willingness to adapt plans in response to feedback.

In general members are advised not to attend separate private briefings as part of public consultation, but instead to attend with the public.



Historic Chapels Trust, St. George's German Lutheran Church,  
55 Alie Street, Aldgate, London E1 8EB, United Kingdom  
chapels@hct.org.uk | [www.hct.org.uk](http://www.hct.org.uk)

Mrs Helen Sandhu  
Clerk to Aston, Cote, Shifford & Chimney Parish Council  
1 Manor Close  
Aston  
Bampton  
OX18 2DD

17<sup>th</sup> February 2015

Dear Mrs Sandhu

*Cote Baptist Chapel – grass cutting*

I am writing to you to seek the Parish Council's comments and support for HCT's proposals for the grass maintenance regime in the burial ground at Cote Baptist Chapel this year.

I attach a proposal for the specification for the grass cutting regime and a plan. I am conscious that there were concerns about the wildflower friendly grass maintenance regime that was tried last year. This year HCT is proposing to return to having the grass trimmed once a month from April to October. I have also forwarded these proposals to our local committee for consultation and I await their comments.

The grass in the area to the rear of the chapel, remains outside of the agreement with our contractor and will continue to be mown by volunteers.

We will seek competitive quotes from local contractors for this work. I would welcome any suggestions of names of local contractors who we might contact for a quote.

I would be grateful if you could let me have any comments on these proposals by the 11<sup>th</sup> March please. I hope the Parish Council will be able to continue to offer a grant towards the costs of the grounds maintenance, as the Historic Chapels Trust has no other source of funding for this work. We have not received a claim from the contractor HCT used in 2014 – hence why I have not yet submitted a claim for costs incurred in 2014.

I will be away from Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> February and will pursue further action on this issue upon my return on 12<sup>th</sup> March.

Yours sincerely

Steve Pilcher  
Deputy Director

cc. Peter Forsaith



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## **Cote Baptist Chapel, Shifford Lane, Cote OX18 2EG**

### **Grounds maintenance requirements**

The site consists of a historic burial ground in front of and alongside Cote Baptist Chapel, with a separate area behind the chapel with C20th and C21st burials.

The grass cutting regime for the historic burial ground part of the burial (marked as 1 on the accompanying plan) and for the area behind the chapel where there currently aren't any burials (marked as 2) on the accompanying plan needs to be as follows:-

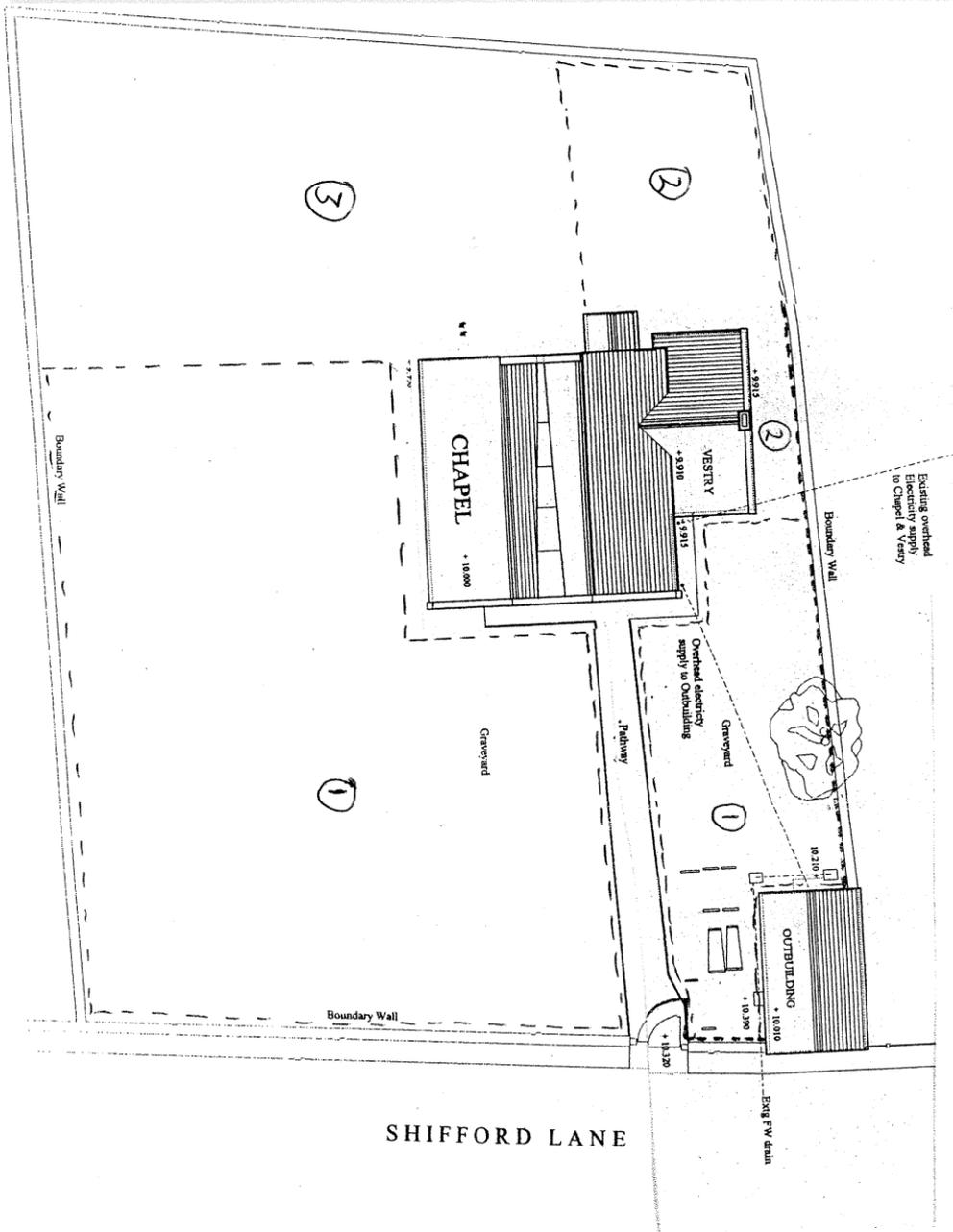
- strim all grass covered areas in areas 1 and 2 once a month, in the first week of the month from April to October inclusive.
- All arisings from grass cutting, and any litter, to be removed from the site - no arisings to be left lying, or composted, on site or on adjoining areas.

Care must be taken to ensure the mower/trimmer does not make contact with any headstone as this will readily cause irreparable damage.

There is a gravel path from the Shifford Lane entrance to the front door of the chapel, which branches to the right to the vestry and to the left to the end of the east elevation of the chapel. This will be weeded and maintained by local volunteers and is not part of this contract.

The area of the graveyard to the rear of the chapel, which contains recent headstones, marked as area 3 on the attached plan, is maintained by local volunteers.

Historic Chapels Trust  
February 2015



**Core Baptist Chapel  
Shifford Lane OX18 2EG**

**Grounds maintenance plan**

**Key**

- 1 Area of historic burial ground
- 2 Area behind chapel where currently there aren't any burials
- 3 Area of late C20th and C21st headstones

## Financial Matters

### 1. Cash Balances

	£
<i>CURRENT ACCOUNT</i>	
Balance at 31 January 2015	9,400.76
OCC – grant towards cost of posts	375.00
Payments authorised & signed on 5 February 2015	(522.20)
<b>Balance at 28 February 2015</b>	<b><u>£ 9,253.56</u></b>
 <i>BUSINESS DEPOSIT ACCOUNT (Santander Bank)</i>	
Balance at 31 January 2015	16,767.48
Transactions in February: interest received	6.41
<b>Balance at 28 February 2015</b>	<b><u>£16,773.89</u></b>
 <b>TOTAL CASH HOLDING AT 28 FEBRUARY 2015</b>	 <b><u>£26,027.45</u></b>

## **ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL CONTROLS**

### **1.0 Overview**

- 1.1 The Parish Council is required to confirm in its Annual Return to the External Auditor that it has “maintained an adequate system of internal control... and reviewed its effectiveness.”
- 1.2 The Parish Council has two documents covering the management of its financial affairs – a set of Financial Regulations and a Statement of Internal Control. Both were comprehensively reviewed and revised in 2009.
- 1.3 The Parish Council now needs to review the system of internal control again so that it can properly sign the Annual Return for 2014/15 when it is due.

### **2.0 Financial Regulations**

- 2.1 The Clerk has reviewed the current Financial Regulations document which was supplied to Councillors in February 2009 and is not proposing any changes to it. It can be recirculated to Councillors if requested.

### **3.0 Statement of Internal Control**

- 3.1 This statement, originally prepared by the Clerk in 2009 and last circulated to Councillors in March 2014, follows this report.
- 3.2 The Clerk has reviewed the statement and confirms that it continues to reflect actual practice.

### **4.0 Recommendation**

- 4.1 That the Parish Council reviews the Statement of Internal Control to consider whether the controls currently in place are effective.

Prepared by: Helen Sandhu, Clerk and RFO  
28 February 2015

**ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY PARISH COUNCIL**

**STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL**

Prepared by H. Sandhu, RFO

Last reviewed and reapproved at a meeting of the Parish Council on 6 March 2014

Cash Book/Bank reconciliations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cash book is kept up to date from original documents (paying-in books, invoices, cheque stubs)</li> <li>• The cash book is reconciled to the bank statement on a quarterly basis</li> <li>• The bank reconciliation is reviewed and approved by a member of the Parish Council (usually the Chairman), with reference to the underlying records (cash book and bank statements)</li> <li>• The bank reconciliation is reported to the full Parish Council and minuted as such</li> <li>• The latest financial position and movements on the Parish Council's cash balances are reported at each council meeting and can be traced back to the expenditure approved in the previous meeting via the minutes</li> </ul>
Financial Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A document listing the Parish Council's financial regulations, based on the model version prepared by NALC/SLCC is maintained. The regulations are reviewed for continued relevance and amended where necessary by the Responsible Financial Officer with any proposed amendments subject to approval by the Parish Council</li> </ul>
Order/Tender controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Financial Regulations list the number of estimates, quotes or full tenders that must be invited depending on the value and nature of the work.</li> <li>• Official orders/letters are sent to suppliers for services which are not regular in nature</li> </ul>
Legal Powers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A proper legal power is identified in advance of any expenditure. The legal power for expenditure is shown on the agenda and minutes for payments made</li> </ul>
Payment controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depending on the nature of the supply, the RFO signs the purchase invoice to indicate that the supply has been received, that the supply has not previously been paid and that the invoice calculations are correct.</li> <li>• Purchase orders/letters ordering the work are matched to purchase invoices where applicable</li> <li>• All invoices for payment are listed on the meeting agenda where the cheques are to be signed</li> <li>• Payments made are listed in the minutes of the meeting</li> <li>• Original invoices are provided to the Councillors signing the cheques</li> <li>• Invoices paid are numbered and the same number entered on the cheque counterfoil and in the cashbook for cross reference purposes</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cheque number used to settle an invoice and the date it was signed are entered on the invoice for cross reference purposes</li> </ul>
s137	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A separate s137 account is maintained</li> <li>• The RFO calculates the maximum amount of s137 expenditure able to be made each year and ensures that it is not exceeded – confirmed to the Parish Council when expenditure is considered either by reference to a specific budget for that payment or to the amount of unspent s137 money available</li> <li>• Where requests for expenditure from s137 are made this is made clear on the meeting agendas where the payment is to be approved</li> <li>• The proper minute authorising expenditure from s137 is prepared on each occasion</li> </ul>
VAT repayment claims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RFO ensures that all invoices are addressed to the Parish Council.</li> <li>• RFO ensures that proper VAT invoices are received where VAT is payable</li> <li>• RFO maintains a VAT account to show that the correct amount of VAT is reclaimed in the year</li> </ul>
Income controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RFO ensures that amount of the precept received is correct in accordance with the precept request sent to the District Council</li> <li>• RFO ensures that the precept instalments are received when due</li> <li>• RFO ensures that other receipts (deposit interest, grass cutting grant) are received when due and correctly calculated</li> <li>• Income is banked promptly</li> </ul>
Financial reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A receipts &amp; payments account, comparing actual expenditure to the budget and the prior year is prepared on a quarterly basis, presented to the Parish Council and minuted as such</li> </ul>
Budgetary controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The budget is prepared in consultation with the Parish Council, as evidenced by reports and minutes in advance of the start of the year</li> <li>• The precept is set on the basis of the budget by the deadline set by the District Council</li> </ul>
Payroll controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Clerk is paid under PAYE as an employee</li> <li>• The Clerk's salary is set by the Council and a minute is prepared to show the agreed salary</li> <li>• The salary is paid by cheque, with the cheque request presented to the Parish Council and the cheque signed by two Councillors</li> <li>• The RFO ensures that all the necessary payroll returns are made to HMRC and retains evidence that this has been done</li> </ul>

Asset Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The RFO maintains a full asset register</li><li>• The existence and condition of assets is checked on a six monthly basis by a member of the Parish Council</li><li>• The adequacy of insurance of the Parish Council's assets is considered annually in advance of the insurance renewal</li></ul>
Internal Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A suitably experienced independent internal auditor is appointed by the Parish Council</li><li>• An internal audit of the Council's accounting records and financial and other procedures is carried out once a year</li><li>• The internal auditor prepares a report addressed to the Parish Council which is considered at the next meeting</li><li>• The Parish Council ensures that it is satisfied that the internal audit is effective before making arrangements for the new annual internal audit</li></ul>