

**DRAFT MINUTES OF ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY 23RD APRIL 2018
IN THE VILLAGE HALL, ASTON AT 7.30 PM**

1. Present: Parish Councillors:
Richard Haines (Chairman)
Jane Everex
Ben Lings
Paul Sparrowhawk
Jane West
Phil West

Helen Sandhu (Parish Clerk)
Hilary Fenton, District Councillor
Charles Mathew, County Councillor
David Hawkins, Chairman of Bampton Exhibition Foundation
Carolyn Simmonds, Chairperson of Aston & Cote Community Trust
Paul Farrow, Trustee of Aston & Cote Community Trust
12 members of the public

2. Apologies: John Ordish, Parish Councillor
Nick Angus, Aston Youth Football

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 24th May 2017

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

5. Bampton Exhibition Foundation – David Hawkins, Chairman

Mr Hawkins told the meeting that the Bampton Exhibition Foundation is a charity that was formed in 1906 to do two things; to look after the building in Bampton that now houses the library and to give bursaries to young people living in the ancient parish of Bampton which includes Aston, Shifford and Lew. The Trustee body includes representatives from across the parish area, two of whom are from Aston.

The building which is now used as a library dates back to 1640, before the Civil War, when Robert Vesey provided £300 for the construction of a grammar school. The building was used as a school for 250 years until 1895 when the state schools were built. Bampton Grammar School was closed and the building was then used by a variety of local clubs and organisations. In 1960 the building had dilapidated to the point where major renovations were needed. Oxfordshire County Council opened a library in the ground floor in 1964 and the library is still running over 50 years later.

The trustees focus on maintaining the building in a good condition. A new roof has just been fitted and the trustees are now working on getting a new staircase built to replace the one that was removed in the 1960s, so that the old schoolroom on the top floor can be used again. Some of the recent renovations have been facilitated from money raised from tourists interested in visiting the locations used for the filming of Downton Abbey – the exterior of the library was used as the location for Downton Hospital.

The trustees are now working to encourage young people across the area (up to the age of 25) to apply for bursaries from the Foundation. Bursaries have historically been given for various activities, including outreach work in Africa and for university fees. Applications can be sent in the form a letter to Marion Dowding, the Bursary Secretary. The existence of the bursary fund has been advertised in the Bampton Beam and Andrew Long has agreed to include an article in a future edition of Voices.

Mr Hawkins ended by saying that Aston resident Andrew Long is joining the trustee body of the Foundation, filling the vacancy left by the resignation of Gerald Mills who was Chairman for 15 years. Aston resident Ted Baughan is also a trustee.

Q: Is the library open to everyone?

A: Yes, it's a public library.

6. Aston & Cote Community Trust – Carolyn Simmonds, Chairperson and Paul Farrow, Trustee

Carolyn Simmonds introduced Paul Farrow. Mr Farrow joined the Community Trust in 2017 and has been a real driving force with the new playground project. The project is going well, but has recently hit a small stumbling block; it was thought that planning permission wouldn't be needed, but the planning department at West Oxfordshire District Council has now advised that planning permission will need to be obtained, which will be an additional expense.

Paul Farrow then spoke further about the playground project. He got involved because he has two young girls who enjoy going to the park, but it is obvious that the play equipment needs to be replaced. Playgrounds are being closed at an alarming rate across the country due to financial pressures faced by the organisations that are responsible for them. Playgrounds are, however, very important for the mental and physical well-being of children.

The plan is to move the playground so that it is next to the village hall, occupying some of the existing parking on the eastern side of the hall. All of the play equipment will be replaced with new disabled-friendly equipment. The Community Trust needs to raise £50,000 to complete the project. A Business Plan has been prepared and a 5 year plan is being developed for the whole site, which will include the construction of a multi-use games court. £2,800 has already been raised from various sources, including the Bampton Welfare Trust, Faye Parker School of Ballet and the local community. The Community Trust is in discussions with the Parish Council about grant funding, has applied to West Oxfordshire District Council for a Community Facilities Grant, and is in the process of preparing grant applications to be sent to national grant-giving bodies.

Mr Farrow told the meeting that the Community Trust needs to demonstrate that the community is engaged in the project and so has set up a Facebook page and has engaged directly with people who use the hall. Mr Farrow ended by saying that any help that people can give, whether this be in the form of fundraising, approaching employers for corporate donations, helping with grant proposals or just helping to raise awareness of the project, would be gratefully received.

Q: Hilary Fenton encouraged Mr Farrow to contact her after the meeting to discuss the requirement for planning permission for the project.

Q: How much has been raised so far?

A: £2,800. There are various grant applications in hand and the Trust is hoping to raise around half of the cost of the project from the local councils. Any other ideas for fundraising that people might have would be gratefully received, particularly as the Trust needs to demonstrate evidence of community support.

Q: What will happen with the old playground?

A: The metal will be sold as scrap, the concrete base removed and the site relevelled and turfed.

Q: Has the costing for the removal of the old playground been included in the project costs?

A: Any costs will be additional to the £50,000 required for the new playground, but the work will mostly be done by volunteers so will not be significant.

7. Aston Youth Football

Nick Angus was not able to attend the meeting but had prepared a report which was read by Paul Sparrowhawk, Parish Councillor:

Having grown from strength to strength over the last three years Aston Youth Football Club has established itself in the Witney and District Youth League. The Club currently fields three teams in the league and has a thriving 'Mini Dribblers' section. The Club philosophy is not only to develop the children's footballing skills and ability but to develop their social skills and respect to others through football. The main aim is to become more than just a football club.

During the past season the Club bought some portable floodlights enabling training to be carried out in Aston through the darker months, making the club self-sustaining for years to come (in previous years the winter training had taken place in Bampton which was an additional expense). This would not have been possible without funding from Oxfordshire FA and the Parish Councils Small Grant Scheme, for which the Club is grateful. The U10s won the UEFA Plate Final at Carterton FC. This was the first taste of 'competitive' football for these children.

The Club has been awarded FA Charter Standard Club status for the second year in a row, meaning that the FA recognises that the Club provides football for children in a safe, fun and controlled environment.

The Club is currently running girls only training sessions in the hope of entering an U11 girls' team into the Oxford Mail Girls' League next season (2018/19).

The use of the Village Hall's committee room to sell refreshments on match days has not only helped the club financially; it has created a positive social atmosphere amongst the parents on match days. Thank you to the Community Trust for the use of this room.

The aims for the future including being able to field 5 teams (u7s, u8s, u9s, u11s & u11s Girls) along with the Mini Dribblers for the 2018/19 season. In order for this to happen the Club will need to a significant increase in the number of volunteers within the club. The Club will continue to work with the local community to help provide football in a safe and fun environment for the local children and will work alongside the successful men's football teams to improve the playing surface of the football pitches.

Mr Angus's report ended by expressing thanks to Ian Dunstan (Chair), Vicky Fuller (Finance), Jason Fuller (Sec), Wendy Angus (Welfare Officer) for all their hard work behind the scenes, and to Aaron Abbott (U7), Ed Apps and Steve Kavanagh (U8) and Jonathan Ayres and Archie Viner (U10) for all their hard work in providing quality coaching for the children.

Q: Carolyn Simmonds said that Nick Angus is an incredible driving force in everything he gets involved in in the parish, and that the parish is very lucky to have him.

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

There has been quite a lot happening in the parish over the last year; these are the main topics.

Housing developments

Mears / Sovereign development (Gladman 1)

Work on the 41 home Mears / Sovereign development on land east of Foxwood has now started. 20 of these will be affordable homes split between affordable rent and shared ownership. The Parish Council has asked that for the affordable homes preference must be given to current residents or people with local connections (e.g. relatives who cannot currently afford to live in the Parish)

A major concern raised by the Parish Council and residents during the planning stages was the inability of the current Thames Water waste water system serving the parish to cope with this size of development. Condition 10 of the Outline planning permission for this development (15/01550/OUT) was that: Development shall not commence until a drainage strategy detailing any on or off site drainage works, has been approved by, the local planning authority in consultation with the sewerage undertaker. No discharge of foul or surface water from the site shall be accepted into the public system until the drainage works referred to in the strategy have been completed. The Parish Council is unaware that an approved strategy has been put in the public domain. The Clerk has therefore contacted the Planning Officer responsible for this development seeking further information on how or whether the conditions have been or are being fulfilled – a response is awaited.

Matthew Homes Ltd development

The Matthew Homes application for 'reserved matters' on appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for the 38 home development on land between Saxel Close and the Village Hall has now been approved by WODC Planning. This means that after certain conditions have been discharged, this development may commence. 19 of these homes will be affordable homes split between affordable rent and shared ownership. The Parish Council has again asked that for the affordable homes preference must be given to current residents or people with local connections.

Gladman 2 development

Gladman won their appeal against the WODC refusal for outline planning to a 30 home application on land north of Foxwood. Up to 50% of these will be affordable homes. At the appeal hearing, representing the Parish Council, Mr Haines said that he was able to address the appeal inspector about the concerns of residents as also was an Aston resident. There is however a possibility of WODC putting in a legal challenge to the appeal decision. Otherwise, the way is clear for the developer to submit an application to deal with 'reserved matters' on appearance, landscaping, layout and scale to WODC Planning in order to gain full approval for the development.

Other Developments

Going back to waste water issues, for development applications of less than 10 homes Thames Water does not need to be consulted. In addition to the three larger development sites outlined above, a total of 16 further homes across eight separate sites in Aston have been granted planning permission. So there is an element of 'creep' and as a matter of course the Parish Council raises the waste water issue for all new build applications.

The total number of new homes with planning permission is therefore 125; an increase of about 27% on Aston's current housing stock.

Parish Council Precept

At the January Parish Council meeting the budget for next financial year 2018 /19 was agreed and set. It was agreed that the precept (the charge on local residents that is collected with the Council Tax) be kept at the current level per household. Thank you to all those who completed and returned the Parish Council Budget Survey in September last year.

Taking into account the feedback from residents it was resolved to set aside any surplus at 31 March 2018 into a new Play Facilities Reserve, with the intention being to use it to support the development of the new playground proposal at the Village Hall by the Community Trust. The Parish Council is pleased to confirm that the amount sitting in this reserve is £11,000. It was also resolved to set up a new Traffic Calming Reserve, with the intention being to generate additional funds to add to the £10,000 of S106 funding which will come from the Mears development adjacent to Foxwood in order to install some traffic calming measures on Cote Road.

Once the Matthew Homes development is built and occupied the Parish Council will receive around £48,000 for improving leisure facilities in the parish. In response to a questionnaire in 2015 the parish residents identified a desire for a multi-use-sports-court to be provided. The total cost for which is estimated at £80,000. The difference has been built up as a specified reserve through the parish precept over the last three year period; this reserve is now complete.

In last year's budget the Parish Council included an amount for a 'Small Grants Scheme' from which non-profit making groups in the parish can apply for one-off project applications, to a maximum value of £500. The Parish Council is pleased to report that last year's grants allowance was fully allocated to help towards the costs:

- to Aston & Cote Primary School towards the visit of the Life Education Bus,
- to Aston Youth FC towards the purchase of a set of portable floodlights,
- and to Aston & Cote Community Trust towards the purchase of new blinds for the committee room.

The Small Grants Scheme will be available again later in this financial year. More information, guidance notes and the application form can be found on the village website (www.astonoxon.com).

Road Safety

The traffic calming reserve which is being built up was mentioned earlier. In addition to this the Matthew Homes development will provide funding for a pedestrian crossing on Cote Road in close vicinity to the school.

For the three large construction sites in Aston the Parish Council has requested that no construction traffic be allowed to pass in front of Aston and Cote school.

At the end of last year the Cote Road footpath on the 60mph stretch between Aston and Cote was narrowing due to grass encroaching on the path tarmac. The Parish Council request to OCC Highways for the footpath to be 'sided out' was completed very promptly.

The Parish Council has recently written to Ian Hudspeth, Leader of the County Council and Yvonne Constance, Cabinet Member for the Environment, expressing concern about the condition of the roads.

In response to the Mears development, Oxfordshire County Council is currently consulting on a proposed extension of the 30mph zone from its current position just outside the Village Hall entrance by a further 140 metres towards Cote. The consultation deadline is Friday 27 April. The Parish Council and our County Councillor have already responded to support this proposal. Mr Haines urged everyone present to also consider responding to the consultation.

Parish Assets

The condition of parish-owned physical assets is regularly reviewed. Last year, during inspection although there were no defects identified which needed urgent attention it was decided to replace the noticeboard at the corner of Southlands / Bull St. This has been completed and the bench at the same location will be replaced by volunteers now the weather has improved. Some of the other benches around the Parish also required minor repairs (painting and staining). Volunteer support to paint these and the telephone box in Cote was gratefully accepted. Our thanks also go to volunteers for litter picking, clearing the weeds from inside the Cote bus shelter and for cleaning and straightening traffic signs and cutting back overgrowing vegetation.

This year being the 100 year commemoration of the cessation of WW1 hostilities, the War Memorial in The Square is to be cleaned and re-lettered.

Parish Elections

Every four years all seven seats on the Parish Council are up for election, with 2018 being an election year. The date of the election is Thursday 3rd May (the same date as the District Council election). The date for nominations has now passed and as there are fewer candidates than seats, those nominated are automatically elected as uncontested. So in fact for the Parish Council election voters won't actually be putting a cross in the box on election day. The uncontested elected Parish Councillors will be Ben Lings, John Ordish, Paul Sparrowhawk, Jane West and Phil West. Richard Haines and Jane Everex did not stand for election and will no longer be Parish Councillors.

This means that there will be two parish councillor 'casual vacancies'. The new Parish Council will be able to co-opt two candidates onto the Parish Council. Anyone interested in applying should contact the Clerk.

Mr Haines ended by thanking all the current parish councillors and the Clerk for their hard work and dedication to this Parish.

Q: Why isn't the extension to the 30mph zone on Cote Road going all the way to Cote?

A: The Police advice is that if a 30mph zone goes past green fields, drivers are prone to speed up. It would be likely that drivers would slow down through Cote but then speed up as they go past the green fields and stay at the higher speed as they enter Aston. The Parish Council is currently considering whether to relocate the vehicle activated sign at the entrance to Saxel Close, but it may be best left where it is as it will act as a reminder to drivers that they are in a 30mph zone.

Q: Doesn't the fact that there is a footpath running alongside the road between Aston and Cote mean that the speed should be lower?

A: The Parish Council is aware that this footpath needs to be maintained properly so that there is no need for anyone to step off it into the road. This is why the Parish Council asked the County Council to carry out the siding out last autumn.

9. Farewell to Richard Haines and Jane Everex – Ben Lings

Ben Lings told the meeting that Richard Haines and Jane Everex will both be leaving the Parish Council as they have not stood for re-election. He expressed thanks to them on behalf of their fellow councillors and local residents. Jane Everex joined the council in November 2012 and has done a great job, particularly in representing Cote and in her work on the Cote Chapel Committee. Richard Haines has been a councillor since July 2010 and has been Chairman since June 2014. He has done a tremendous job representing the Parish Council and residents and has addressed the WODC Planning Committee on planning applications in the parish on several occasions. Mrs Everex and Mr Haines were presented with a small gift and flowers as an expression of the public's thanks.

10. West Oxfordshire District Council – Councillor Hilary Fenton

Work on the Local Plan is drawing to a close. The Planning Inspector advised that the Plan could be found to be legally sound with some minor modifications. These have now been made and are being consulted on. The Inspector will then consider the updated Plan and at that point will either find that the Plan is sound and can be adopted by the District Council, or could request further changes. Once the Plan is in place it will be easier for the District Council to resist undesired speculative planning applications and to control where new housing is built.

Together with the other Oxfordshire councils the District Council has recently signed the Government Growth Deal for Oxfordshire which will see the county receiving funding of £215 million for infrastructure and additional housing. The housing required in the Deal has already largely been included in the councils' Local Plans, so the Deal will not generate significant extra housing. The funding will therefore substantially be spent on transport infrastructure.

Most residents are aware that the household waste collection contract changed in October 2017. For various reasons the introduction of the new system did not go as smoothly as would have been liked, and at the start there were a lot of missed collections, particularly on narrow streets. These problems have been addressed and the service has substantially improved, although it was impacted by the adverse weather earlier in the year. Mrs Fenton said that some residents have been complaining about how the bins are left after they have been emptied; sometimes they appear to be "thrown down" and broken. Mrs Fenton said that the District Council wants people to report these issues so that they can identify the crews causing the problems. Recycling rates under the new system have improved considerably, but unfortunately people are sometimes putting non-recyclables into the recycling bin, so a lot more sorting of the waste is required which takes time. The District Council is working to ensure that the recycling rate is increased; the district used to have one of the best recycling rates in the country and wants to regain this status. Any plastic bags can now be used to dispose of food waste in the food waste bins (not just the bio-degradable bags), as the plastic bags are extracted and burned.

Q: It is good to hear that the work on the Local Plan is nearly complete, but I am concerned about how many years it has taken to get to that point, because in the meantime Aston like many areas has been blighted with speculative housing. When will the Plan finally be signed off?

A: It is hoped that the Plan will be adopted in a matter of weeks.

Q: What is the status of the drainage conditions on the two larger housing developments?

A: The District Council always asks for the drainage conditions to be applied as Grampian conditions, meaning development cannot start and/or the houses occupied until the conditions have been fulfilled. (Hilary Fenton) said that she is aware that the sewerage system in Aston fails due to the inadequate pipe size.

A: *(Richard Haines, Parish Council). The Parish Council is in communication with the Planning Officer to get confirmation on what is happening about the discharge of the drainage conditions.*

It was acknowledged that Thames Water is also culpable in the problems with the waste water system. Charles Mathew told the meeting that every community that he represents has issues with waste water flooding. He encouraged residents to do whatever they can to put pressure on Thames Water to address the issues.

Q: *What is happening with the possible Judicial Review of the appeal decision for the second Gladman site behind Foxwood?*

A: *(Richard Haines, Parish Council). The Parish Council has been communicating with District Councillor Steve Good about this. Mr Good didn't have any further information when he came to the last Parish Council meeting. The District Council lawyers are apparently of the opinion that the District Council would have a case to request a review of the appeal decision, but it is not clear whether the District Council will pursue this, and if they don't then the applicant will be able to move forwards to seek final planning approval on the site.*

11. Oxfordshire County Council – Councillor Charles Mathew

Mr Mathew told the meeting that six months ago the new vehicle weight enforcement camera was installed on Newbridge. It took a lot of time to achieve, but the camera was finally installed and hopefully this will make a difference to the problem of large lorries going over Newbridge. 40% of the lorries which breach the weight restriction come from overseas.

Mr Mathew acknowledged that there is an issue with potholes and encouraged everyone to use the fixmystreet website page to report all the potholes they see. He said that he is aware that the Parish Council has recently written to both Ian Hudspeth and Yvonne Constance, Oxfordshire County Councillors, and expressed the view that we need to keep the pressure up on the County Council to take action.

Thames Water has reopened their proposal to build a large (150 million cubic metres) reservoir near Abingdon. Mr Mathew expressed the view that if Thames Water were to repair their existing infrastructure there would be no need for the new reservoir. He said that in his opinion Thames Water only want to build the reservoir to enable them to sell water to third parties outside the Thames Water area.

Mr Mathew went on to talk about the A40. He expressed the view that any possible gain achievable from the changes proposed for the A40 (park and ride, partial bus lane) would be exceeded by the increase in traffic generated from the proposed additional nearly 16,000 homes to be built in West Oxfordshire over the Local Plan period. He expressed the view that the County Council needs to look at alternative transport schemes that would take traffic off the A40. He has raised various questions about this to the Oxfordshire Growth Board, a Government institution, which he said is not accountable to the public. The Growth Board comprises all the leaders of Oxfordshire's District and County Councils and members of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The members of the LEP are also not accountable to the public and were largely self-appointed. Mr Mathew said that he has asked the Growth Board to review whether the current proposals for the A40 are genuinely the best plan. He said that in his opinion the survey which was done some time ago was inaccurate because the percentage of traffic it showed as passing through the county towards the M40 was grossly understated. Mr Mathew said that he would like the proposals to be reviewed by an independent body because the Growth Board membership includes the County Council leader who was party to the creation of the plan in the first instance. Mr Mathew said that in

his view the £175 million which the Growth Board plans to spend on the A40 (out of the £215 million to be provided by the Government in the Growth Deal) will not achieve any transport improvements.

Mr Mathew said that he is concerned about the level of local policing; the local area now has only one PCSO (Helen Keen) and this isn't adequate.

Mr Mathew ended by telling the meeting that all the county councillors have been allocated £15,000 which they can spend on projects of their choice and encouraged any local organisations which have projects which need funding to contact him.

Q: How do you propose that local communities "rebel" against Thames Water?

A: West Oxfordshire District Council has tried to achieve action; both I and Rodney Rose (former Deputy Leader of Oxfordshire County Council) have had meetings with Thames Water. They make a lot of promises but never actually take any action. Thames Water provides a public service but is not publically accountable.

Q: Is there an ombudsman?

A: Yes – Ofwat.

A: People can also write to the Oxford Times.

Q: What is happening about the previous proposals to create a Unitary Authority?

A: This is still with the Government for review. The likelihood that this may move forward has increased given the increasing co-operation across the Oxfordshire councils, particularly on the Growth Board. In my opinion this is the way forward, with all the councils working together.

A: Hilary Fenton expressed agreement with this viewpoint.

Q: How many councils is the District Council now working with under the shared services agreement?

A: (Hilary Fenton, District Councillor) I'm not sure as my field of engagement relates to West Oxfordshire only – council business itself is kept separate, whilst the officers are shared across multiple councils. I think the shared service arrangement is working well and the service people receive should be the same or better.

There was some disagreement with this viewpoint, particularly in relation to waste collection and Mrs Fenton encouraged anyone who is still having problems with the waste service to contact her direct.

12. Open Questions

Richard Haines opened the meeting to any other questions which had not been discussed earlier in the meeting. There were none.

13. Close of Meeting

Richard Haines thanked the speakers for their presentations and the members of the public who came for attending and participating in the meeting. He reminded the meeting of the District Council election on Thursday 3rd May and said that the next Parish Council meeting had been delayed by a week to Thursday 10th May due to the elections.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.

Signed

dated.....