

WOODCOTE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of WOODCOTE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held in the Village Hall,
Woodcote 6th June 2017.

PRESENT	Chairman	Mr. R. Peirce
	Vice Chairman	Mr. G. Botting
		Mr. A. Crockett
		Mr. M. Smith
		Mr. B. Williams
		Mrs. D. Hadaway

District Council David Nimmo-Smith.
County Councillor Kevin Bulmer.

Parish Clerk Ms J. Welham

Members of Public in attendance: Mrs & Mrs Green residents, 1 Councillor from Tylers Green to ask about Neighbourhood Planning.

1. APOLOGIES.

Apologies from District Councillor David Nimmo-Smith, Dr. P. Sudbury, Mr. K. Ison, Mr. S. Peates, Mrs. F. Preston, Mrs. M. Maddock.

2. TO AUTHORISE the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 19th April 2016. Then minutes were accepted and signed as a true record.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

The Chairman reported on activities over the last year;

Major Projects/works

Zebra Crossing for Goring Road, ongoing, consultation complete one objection. Awaiting final costings then can approve and get date for when work can begin. Spend so far on professional services £7950.

Investigation into speed calming along Goring Rd, best solution speed humps, lighting would need upgrading and positioning needs to be carefully planned – this will be re examined when the Zebra Crossing is complete.

There will also be an evaluation for a second pedestrian crossing at junction Beech Lane/Bridle Path by the Co-op.

Other areas being investigated, parking on Reading Rd and Greenmore.

The Chairman thanked Cllr. Smith for his hardwork as Chair of the Traffic Advisory Group.

Transfer of Woodland adjacent to Long Toll development Snowdrop Wood is now owned by the PC so will be a conservation area following completion of the first WNHP site at the old bus depot. Fourteen houses, of which 4 where open market, five shared ownership and five rented.

First registration with Land Registry of the Village Hall and Green finalised in January 2016.

Neighbourhood Plan

Planning has been granted on 4 allocated sites in the NHP for 67 houses, nearly all ½ or 3 bedroomed. Old Bus Depot Long Toll, (14) built and completed. Others granted Chiltern Rise Reading Rd, (24 plus 2 replacement) Garden Centre, (9) Old Reservoir site Greenmore, (20) however the PC cannot dictate to developers when they start to build. Detailed ongoing discussions by the PC with the Oratory School and owners of the Garden Centre sites to co-ordinate the new development. Community Infrastructure Levy Funds from new developments will be received by the PC. The amount paid is per square metre per property on each development and the PC will receive 25% of the total funds as Woodcote have made a Neighbourhood Plan.

2nd Neighbourhood Plan – housing and land use until 2033.

The second NHP is being made to comply with SODC Local Plan 2033. Work has already begun and further detail from Chair of Advisory Group Geoff Botting.

Village Hall

Detailed plans for upgrading and improvements to the Woodcote Village Hall to make the hall more attractive to users have been drawn up. Full overhaul and upgrade of the Village Hall Central heating system was carried out, cost £3383. Provided defibrillator outside VH, so residents can access a defib at any time. Cost £2020.

Village Green

Purchase and installation of outdoor table tennis table & base £3720. Ongoing repairs to the play area £3221. The Chairman thanked Sam Peates Chair of the Village Green Committee and the whole committee for their ongoing work and support.

Ongoing PC business

Village maintenance continues, with the grass cutting contract, a new contractor has been engaged for the hedge cutting of key hedges, tree maintenance, all ongoing. Litter picking and war memorial garden. Thanks to Andy and Lesley Crockett. Also to Keith Smallbone for the garden.

Continued upkeep of village hall for capital maintenance, such as clock repair after vandalism £1280, and heating overhaul mentioned above.

Continue to support the Library, the PC fund the professional Librarian salary for Saturday mornings as the County Council made cuts. Village Hall and Village Green committees, Volunteers, Community Centre, Church for graveyard maintenance with annual grants.

Sought various professional services and Legal services to assist the PC with carrying out Parish business.

Annual spring clean by SODC contractors

Bus Service in Woodcote

There will be timetable changes from September. On going discussions with Thames Travel for a more frequent bus service by getting the X39 and X40 buses to stop in the village. Possible changes to the route around the village and with a new bus stop outside the Village Hall.

Current issues

Planning application to enlarge the Co-op stores and provide some additional parking. The Pc have responded with several conditions to be met should this application be granted.

National Junior Men and Women's Cycle Road Race Sunday 16th July. Wallingford Cycle Club are running this event and it will affect Woodcote and will run through Woodcote a number of times both morning and afternoon. A programme of road closures will be in place on that day with professional traffic management staff out on the roads. Help from local residents' is welcomed. The Men will be at 10.20am and the Women at 2.10pm from Wallingford. It will be a great opportunity for residents to watch and support this National event.

Lastly The Chairman thanked;

Jenny the Parish Clerk for her continued hard work and keeping the finances on track. Also thanked Jo Lilleywhite who stood in at short notice for Jenny when she was off sick in February and March.

All Councillors on the Parish Council for their work and commitment, stating that in his 30 years experience of being involved with Woodcote Parish Council as a District Councillor and as a Parish Councillor he felt the current members were some of the most hardworking and professional that he had worked with.

Thanked Bob Lewin Councillor for all of his hard work and commitment on the NHP Advisory group and the detailed work with the Education Advisory Group. Regrettably he has stood down from being a Parish Councillor due to other family commitments.

The Chairman advised that there is currently a vacancy for a Parish Councillor so invited anyone interested to contact the Clerk.

4. COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT –

Cllr. Bulmer was absent, but he sends regular monthly reports to the PC. His last report was brief as due to the election the Council are in Purdah.

6. DISTRICT COUNCILLORS REPORT

Cllr. Nimmo-Smith reported;

District Councillors' Report 2016 / 2017

Dealing with Issues - We have continued to actively support our Parish Councils and residents with questions and issues concerning development, ranging from questions about fences and hedges up to issues around new major developments. We encouraged the District Council to fight two Planning Appeal rulings with Judicial Reviews in the High Court at the start of this Council year, but unfortunately the Court found in favour of the developers, ending our Five Year Land Supply.

We have worked with our MP, John Howell, in trying to get back control of development. John has been the driving force behind the Neighbourhood Planning Bill and White Paper proposals that were before Parliament before the General Election was called and, if the present administration is returned to government, these should become part of Planning Law. As it stands, John worked hard to get Planning Minister Gavin Barwell's support for Neighbourhood Planning, resulting in his Written Ministerial Statement before Christmas, which has helped the Planning Committee refuse unwanted applications, most notably at Sonning Common.

Didcot Garden Town is a major part of our plan for development in the District, offering a significant number of jobs and homes. Following the consultation, all comments from the website, events and conversations with community groups are being used to help prepare a draft masterplan for the Garden Town. This will be published soon.

Our plans to 'refresh' Berinsfield are progressing at a good pace and will bring significant benefits to this community and the wider district.

SODC successes

Community Safety - Even with the major cuts of the austerity years, our Police & Crime Commissioner has introduced initiatives seeing Thames Valley Police Force's performance maintain its position as one of the effective forces, right at the top of the League. Our Community Safety Team work closely within the CS Partnership strengthening the County's contributions.

Waste And Recycling - For the third year SODC has been awarded top place in the Recycling League Table in the country. We are asked if waste really is recycled, and we can confirm that that is the case. We have worked with the council's Waste Team and BIFFA, who are up-grading their fleet of lorries and trialling new collection methods to further improve the service.

Finances - South Oxfordshire remains a financially sound council. Despite increasing financial restrictions, we have been able to freeze for the second year running our part of the council tax. Our sound and prudent approach to money has still allowed us to maintain our Capital & Revenue Grants scheme. This scheme has provided;

Revenue Grants - £391,037 to 15 organisations towards their 2016-17 running costs. We also awarded £1.7 million to a further 17 organisations for the four years 2017-21.

Capital Grants - £998,817 to 25 projects including play area improvements, window replacements and defibrillators. and we shall be maintaining this in the coming year.

SODC financial management commitment to the future is being driven through the Corporate Services project, with joint working between 5 councils to bring down costs. Other areas for this type of saving are being regularly reviewed.

Unitary Authority Bids – our proposals for a Unity Authority were stopped by the changes within the Government following the Brexit decision last year. Following the County Council's publication of its revised proposals earlier this year, we and the Vale Council decided to join them in preparing a combined bid which would deliver based on the strengths of all three councils, which is now with the Department for Communities and Local Government. A Minister announcement is expected before the Parliament summer recess.

Other Matters

In June 2016 the councils pledged to resettle eight Syrian refugee families under a Home Office funded scheme. The scheme is making good progress - Two families have been resettled in South Oxfordshire We have published the Encouraging volunteering in the districts report, a summary of consultation and research undertaken to develop an understanding of how volunteering could be supported and encouraged by the councils. The survey shows that about 25 per cent of

residents from all age groups across South and Vale undertake voluntary work. The types of volunteering are varied, with community and environmental activities being the most popular.

We have helped secure grants for our Parish Councils, supported the various initiatives being taken with neighbourhood planning and provided help and advice in any areas where we can.

Our housing needs team has picked up a Bronze Award from the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) as part of their ongoing work in preventing homelessness. This demonstrates again the commitment of both councils and its staff to work together to help prevent people in the most vulnerable households from becoming homeless. The standard for these awards is very high so this is great news and highlights the improvements the team have made to their service. They will deservedly pick up their Bronze Award at the NPSS conference in July.

South and Vale urban design officers, together with collaboration from other specialist officers, have had the South Oxfordshire Design Guide shortlisted for the Public Sector entry in the Francis Tibbalds Urban Design Awards 2017. Being shortlisted for the award is a good step towards raising the profile of the Council and the need to secure high quality design in South Oxfordshire. Awarded by the Urban Design Group, the awards give more recognition to urban design work, particularly at project stage.

We helped drive the festivities for the Queen's Ninetieth Birthday Celebrations in June last year and helped with provision of funding. 72 parishes were awarded £50,626 to help pay for community events including street fairs, barn dances and firework displays. That's our summary of 2016/2017.

6. WOODCOTE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Group, Report to the Annual Parish Meeting FROM Geoff Botting Chairman of the Group;

Introduction

The Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) Advisory Group has been established by the Parish Council to review, and make recommendation on changes to, the current WNP as a result of the emerging new South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

Membership

The Advisory Group is a mix of those who produced the current WNP and those who responded to invitations in the Correspondent for new members.

Helen Baker
John Ballanger
Geoff Botting
David Croft
Richard Fletcher

Jerry Green
David Humphris
Mark Lillywhite
Robin Peirce

Malcolm Smith
Caroline Svendesen
Brian Williams
Liam Woolley

WNP 2012-2027

The current WNP identified 5 sites for development. At the time of writing:

- i. The old Chilterns Queen Bus Depot has been developed with 10 new Housing Association (Social) homes and 4 open market homes;
- ii. Planning permission has been granted for 24 new homes on Chiltern Rise;

- iii. Planning permission has been granted for 20 new homes on the old Reservoir site on Greenmore. Six of these are one bed homes and five are two bed properties.
- iv. Planning permission is expected shortly for 9 new homes on the site of Woodcote Garden Centre.

These developments mean that Woodcote will have seen 70 new homes approved in the last four years, more than in the last three decades combined. In addition there is the additional benefit of removing two local eyesores: the derelict Chiltern Queens depot and the old reservoir site.

WNP 2012 - 2033

The Advisory Group has met 8 times since beginning work in late October 2016. Initial work focussed on (i) updating the views of the community with an all-village survey in January 2017, (ii) assembling the list of potential development sites for subsequent assessment and (iii) making it possible for all to participate in the work.

All-village Survey

At the end of January nearly 2000 individual voter forms and over 1000 household forms were distributed with between 70 and 75% returned. The results are available in the Library and on the WNP website www.woodcotendp.org.uk. Both the Parish Council and the WNP team were very encouraged to see the very high level of support for the WNP in the village. This was a major effort and we'd like to thank everybody who completed the questionnaires, who distributed and collected them and who keyed in the results.

Consultation

In May some 175 people attended an open meeting in the Village Hall and were able to discuss their hopes for, and ask questions about, our Neighbourhood Plans. While many, including the WNP team, had not expected the current WNP to require updating so soon the Advisory Group were able to explain that the need arose from South Oxfordshire's failure to demonstrate that they had enough land to meet the projected need for new homes in the next 5 years. 170 questionnaires were returned and the responses therein will be considered as part of the evidence base used to construct the plan.

One attendee was John Howell, our local MP, who has been a long-term supporter of Woodcote's NP.

Funding

The costs of the work to date have been met by a grant of nearly £3000 from Locality. This will, we hope, be supplemented by a grant from SODC, who are currently considering our application, to cover additional costs.

Looking Forward

The new SODC Local Plan 2033 is planned to be adopted in late 2018. The Parish Council and WNP Advisory Group want to have the new WNP adopted as soon as possible after that. With that in mind the immediate focus is (i) identifying the sites that have been identified by, or offered to, SODC as potential development sites in the parish and evaluating these against, for example, the European Sustainability requirements and local preferences and (ii) clarifying the need for land for uses other than housing and possible means of meeting those.

Finally

As Chairman I would like to express my gratitude, personally and on behalf of the community, to the Advisory Group who volunteer an enormous amount of time and effort into developing recommendations that will maintain Woodcote as a good, vibrant, place to live.

Geoff Botting Chair, Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Group May 2017.

7. Written Reports from Other Local Committees/Groups in Woodcote

Reports had been received from, the Village Green Committee this report had already been published in the June Correspondent, The Youth Club, Woodcote Rally, and the Dr. Higgs South Stoke Educational Charity.

Copies available from the Parish Clerk.

Mr. Green member of OWL, advised that the group, due to cuts from the County Council on book supply had raised funds to replenish the Library with 250 new books. However, the CC have now resumed supplying new books but at a reduced volume to previously.

8. PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 2015/16

The Parish Clerk reported that the Parish Council budget over the past year was on budget and in some cases below budget. Any surplus funds were held in reserve at the end of the year to be used for major projects around the village such a Traffic, Village Maintenance etc.

The current reserve figure appears rather large, however, a large amount will be spent on the Zebra Crossing installation.

The Annual report will be available from 26th June after audit on request from the Parish Clerk, it will also be on the village website and can be emailed or a copy collected from the Parish Office by residents who wish to have a copy.

The Chairman asked if there were any questions;

Mr. Green raised the issue of Communication by the Parish Council to the Village residents asking if there were plans to improve? The Chairman responded stating the PC are aware of this and use every means at their disposal, Village website, PC Facebook page, Woodcote Correspondent, Email mailing list (although not every resident is on this list) and when necessary leaflet drops to every house in the village.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

Meeting closed at 8.30pm