

Minutes of the meeting of Sonning Common Parish Council on Monday 20 November 2017 in the Village Hall.

Present: Mrs Lewis (Chairman); Mr Fort; Mr Howe; Mr Greenwood; Mr Jones; Mrs Phillips-Tilbury; Mr Rawlins; Mr Rinta-Suksi; Mr Rust and Mr Stoves. Also: Mr Collings (Parish Clerk) and Mrs Varnes (Deputy Parish Clerk).

Also present: Cllr D Bartholomew; Mr C McLoughlin Henley Standard and Mr A Negus.

- 18/092 Apologies for absence: Mrs Diwell, Mr Kedge and Cllr Harrison. No declarations of interests.
- 18/093 Public Question Time under Section 30 of Standing Orders Mr Negus stated that he wished to comment when item 18/103 was reached.
- 18/094 Police Report no report other than emails from TVP.
- 18/095 Minutes of previous meetings:
- 095.01 Finance Committee held on 8 November 2017 were presented and approved.
 - 095.02 Planning Committee held on 16 October 2017 were presented and approved.
 - 095.03 Parish Council meeting held on 16 October 2017 were presented and approved.
- 18/096 County Councillor's Report. In addition to his emailed report Cllr Bartholomew reported on calculating housing numbers that whilst SODC supports the new methodology OCC opposes it wishing to stay with the existing higher numbers; that Chiltern Edge is declared to be an 'improving school and he is optimistic that closure will not be recommended. Regarding 3rd Reading Bridge it was resolved to restate the resolution made on 17 February 2014: 'The Parish Council accepts that a third bridge is needed, subject to the following conditions:
1. The road infrastructure can cope with the extra traffic without adverse effects on Sonning Common.
 2. That South Oxfordshire is provided with formal Green Belt planning guarantees that neither the bridge nor the road route will be used to justify approval of further housing or other development along it.
 3. There is no question of Reading using the existence of a third bridge to claim any part of South Oxfordshire.'
- Highmoor Parish Council is to hold a meeting of parishes concerned in January to provide a collective voice on the matter.
- 18/097 District Councillor's Report – circulated by email. Mr Jones raised the need for a local air quality measurement to be conducted possibly with help from Johnson Matthey.
- 18/098 Parish Clerk's Report – the Clerk was asked to obtain a justification of the £5K set up cost for a speed limit change.
- 18/099 Memorial Hall Field Working Party (MHFWP) update. It was reported that new drawings have been prepared and costs are expected in the next week.
- 18/100 Village Centre Working Party (VCWP) –Mr Howe reported on positive progress being made towards a draft report from Ben Hamilton-Baillie.
- 18/101 SON6 Appeal. Mr Fort reported that the Council has been granted Rule 6 status at the appeal and will therefore have to be professionally represented. Residents are being briefed on how to submit objections. David Winchester will co-ordinate the launch of a crowd-funding appeal early in 2018. It was resolved to approve funding in excess of £10K if needed.
- 18/102 Environment Working Party. Mr Rust gave a significant update on all areas – Appendix A – and was congratulated on the progress made..
- 18/103 Club SC – the Clerk reported that the transfer of responsibility is progressing. Mr Negus volunteered to continue to assist if needed.
- 18/104 Meeting dates for 2018 – proposed dates were confirmed.

- 18/105 Play areas works. Mrs Varnes reported on the great range of costs being put forward to renew worn out surfaces in play areas. It was agreed that a written proposal is needed.
- 18/106 Skatepark – The offer already made of a reward of up to £400 for information leading to Police action was approved.
- 18/107 A request that a pedestrian crossing be provided on Wood Lane between the two bus stops was discussed and it was agreed that this should be subsumed into the VCWP work.
- 18/108 Budget/Precept and resources. The meeting was briefed on aggregate demands to be met from the precept including resources needed to handle increased workload. After discussion it was agreed that the whole matter should be finalised after a detailed briefing on 18 December.
- 18/109 Matters for future agendas. Florence House presentation. Precept 2018/19. Contribution to Gladman appeal.

Meeting closed at 21.35.

Next meeting Monday 18 December 2017 at 20.00.

Chairman: Dated:

Appendix A EWP Report 20th November 2017

We have had two meetings so far, and have spent over three hours discussing the pond, new trees for the village, and our new woodland.

1. Pond

It was felt that the ducks were the primary attraction for villagers, so these are being kept, but we hope, by means of a notice at the pond and an article in Sonning Common Magazine, to educate the public to feed them with more appropriate items than bread. Hopefully this might reduce their numbers slightly. The notice about not leaving food around to attract rats will also be modified to alert the public of the danger of Weils Disease.

Arum Tree Services were employed to tidy up the open area at each end of the pond and to make the big tree near the Johnson Matthey (JM) car park safe. The brambles by the seat at the duck end and on the log have been severely cut back. Dead trees and a few saplings have been removed from the JM end, and the ivy taken off from the bottom portion of the trees by the JM fence. Very positive comments about how tidy the areas now look have been received.

Rob Smith is in the process of replacing the short posts and linking chain at the edge of the grassy area at the duck end in order to prevent vehicles parking on the grass, and to make it safer for families with young children.

In the future the duck platform at the village end will need to be repaired, and some of the trees around the pond pruned. Councillor Jones is getting the old wall along the road side of the pond, together with its foundations, checked by an expert.

2. New Trees

It was agreed to purchase, through Mulberry Plants:-

a) One Field Maple to go in the Millenium Green, in memory of Linda Webb, who was a very active Village Gardener, to screen the Green from the Lea Meadows development.

b) One Wild Cherry to go at the front of the Butchers Arms Pub, right by the road, to replace a very old, dead cherry, which had spectacular white blossom in the spring, in memory of the landlord's wife. The disease-resistant elm planted in the area overlooking the pond for the White-letter Hairstreak butterflies is growing well.

Plaques will be provided by the families.

c) One Oak to go in the green space along Crowsley Way to replace a dead tree.

d) One Weeping Crab Apple to go at the back of the Lea Road Play Area to replace a much larger tree that was removed by the Parish Council at the request of a resident because it was cutting out so much light. This new tree will help to break up the fence-line without casting so much shadow.

e) Two Photinia pink marble bushes and two Aucuba japonica 'Crotonoides' to fill the remaining gaps along the fence that leads in from the entrance to the Lea Road Play Area. The pairs of Photinia red robin and Eleagnus ebbingei Gilt Edge planted last year are helping to break up the long bare fence line, but it was felt that at least two more pairs of colourful bushes are needed as well.

The opposite fence will be dealt with next year once we see which of the four types of plant look the best. Variegated Euonymus bushes were also considered for this area, but were deemed unsuitable because of the risk to children if the leaves or berries were eaten. Golden privet is another colourful bush with poisonous berries. Photinia leaves are not good for horses or dogs, but these should not be roaming unsupervised in a children's play area!

f) Before any planting of bushes is done at the Baskerville Road Play Area the fence at the Orchard Avenue end is going to be repaired and stained.

g) The rough area at the far end of the Churchill Crescent Play Area is to be allowed to develop before a decision is made as to what further natural planting can be used to screen the houses below it.

h) At the entrance to Kennylands Road the two large laurel bushes planted last year have survived in spite of a dry winter, and are already screening the view of the houses from the road. Now two Euonymus japonicus Aureapictus and one Euonymus japonicus Bravo will be planted in the back of the Village Gardeners' bed to try to brighten up this entrance to the village, since smaller plants are hardly noticeable to the occupants of vehicles speeding by on either side. In addition, the maintenance of smaller plants right out there is very difficult. Cornus and grasses planted there in the past have all died. Brian Willis will be asked to look after the Euonymus once he has planted them until they have settled in.

i) It was felt that the area by the electrical substation at the start of Grove Road looked much better now that the new houses had been built, and screening was not currently necessary.

j) Possible contributions to help with the screening of Kidbys Yard and SON 5 from the AONB might be considered at a later date.

3. Our New Woodland

The resident along Woodlands Road living closest to Old Copse has tidied up the entrance area very nicely in keeping with its woodland setting.

Our Parish Clerk had a safety check done on the state of the trees before he committed us to purchasing the wood. However, in the not-too-distant-future some of the trees will need to have the ivy removed from their bottom section. This might be a task for the Green Gym. They might also be able to help with the removal of some of the holly, which in places is hindering access to woodland areas, and has really become a weed. We need to establish with the Woodland Trust where the boundary between our woodlands is, for insurance, safety and maintenance purposes. In places a raised bank clearly marks the boundary; in others there is a fence with wire strands in good condition. However, in some places the wire is down and will need removing, and in others there are fence posts which have rotted and will need replacing or shortening. This might be another job that could be done by the Green Gym. At a later date other features might be added to the wood, such as picnic tables, play trails for young children etc. The Forestry Commission has some interesting ideas on its website, and there are examples of developed woods that can be visited.