

**Minutes of the Northmoor Parish Council Meeting
Held on Wednesday 14 February 2024 at 8:00pm in the Village Hall**

Attendees

Parish Councillors

Dr Graham Shelton Chair
Mrs Carrie Berry
Mr Neil Reeves
Miss Stacey Reed
Mrs Juliet Druce
Mr Chris Isaac Clerk

County/District Councillors

N/A

Members of the public

Mrs J Williams, Mrs J Jones, Mr M Ryan.

1. Apologies for absence

OCC Cllr Dan Levy, WODC Cllr Charlie Maynard WODC Cllr Lysette Nicholls

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting on the 10 January 2024, copies of which had been previously circulated to all members, were agreed as a true record, and were signed by the chairman.

4. Matters Arising

a. Clean up after your dog signs

The Clerk has contacted WODC regarding the provision of the signs. They do not have any in stock but will provide some after the next production run.

b. Annual Litter Pick Saturday 2 March 2024

Graham Shelton suggested that the volunteers would meet outside of the Village Hall at 10:00am for a safety brief. Litter pickers and bags would be provided, but volunteers should wear gloves and robust footwear, along with clothing appropriate for the weather.

Julie Williams requested that the collected waste was not left blocking the entrance to the transformer in the Village Hall car park.

Clerk to publicise the event on the village website, the two mailing lists and the Facebook page.

c. SSE - power cut communications, compensation and generator grant application

The Clerk had contacted SSE regarding the poor communications on Christmas Day about the power cut that had affected the whole parish (and further afield), and whether they would consider giving compensation as a good will gesture. He also asked if they were going to repeat the generator grant scheme this year. SSE stated that they appreciated the feedback and would try to improve communications on future outages, recognising that more pessimistic messages would help people make alternative arrangements earlier. They

stated that they were unable to give any compensation as the outage didn't meet the criteria given by ofgem but suggested that residents claim for any loss through their household Insurance. They also said that the generator grant scheme would be running later in the year and that all Parish Councils should receive notification when this year's scheme is open (and what it is offering).

5. Reports from Councillors and Clerk

a. OCC Cllr Dan Levy & WODC Cllr C Maynard both gave reports which Graham Shelton read out in their absence. Both reports are included at the end of these minutes.

b. Juliet Druce gave an update on the Emergency Plan and noted that she would be asking residents if they had any assets that they were willing to share/use in an emergency (such as tractors, chainsaws etc). It was noted that Bablock Hythe have their own Emergency Committee and that the two would be aligned where appropriate.

c. Juliet also briefed on the allotments. It was noted that with the exception of 1 plot they were well maintained, and as that particular tenant no longer lived in the village the lease may not be renewed if there were anyone from within the parish that wanted a plot. There was a discussion regarding the rental cost and the fact it didn't currently cover the ground rent and water bills. It was agreed that it would be too large an increase to raise the rent to cover all costs immediately, so it was agreed to raise the rent to £30 a year for a full plot and £17 for a half plot.

Juliet to draft a new Allotment Tenancy Agreement letter for the Clerk to distribute to the tenants.

d. Stacey Reed gave an update on Robert Courts' visit after the latest flood at Bablock Hythe, a report is included at the end of the minutes. Unfortunately, Stephen Barclay Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs was not able to attend. It was an encouraging meeting and the Parliamentary Aid had actioned all points raised. Robert Courts suggested that Greenwood Parks should provide more assistance, SSE should provide an emergency generator and the Environment Agency needed to be more involved, potentially engaging a Hydrologist. Thames Water were less accommodating, claiming that they were not responsible for the sewage on Thameside Court as it was private land, and they closed the case. Stacey noted that this has missed the point that the sewage is coming from the River Thames due to Thames Water continually dumping sewage from treatment works further upstream such as Standlake. Graham suggested asking Robert Courts to get Thames Water to reopen the case as he had previously requested to be told of all issues with Thames Water.

e. Neil Reeves reported that vehicles had been speeding along Standlake Road and parking on the pavement outside of Red Lion Cottages, forcing people to go onto the road to get around them. The Clerk added that whilst it didn't make it right, wheelchairs and pushchairs had to use the road regardless as the grass verge had encroached over the pavement.

f. The Clerk reported on the following points:

i. **Bank Account Access**

Barclays had sent the car and account details, now waiting for the PIN to be able to access the accounts.

ii. **Thames water road signs**

The latest Thames Water works have again resulted in Road Closed signs remaining in place long after the work was completed, which in turn has affected residents and local

businesses.

The signs were erected on Sun 4 Feb, the Clerk received a Road Closure notice on Mon 5 Feb and Lisa at the Red Lion phoned TW on Tue 6 Feb to be told that the work was completed on the Sunday but the signs weren't due to be taken down until Wed 7 Feb

Clerk to write to Thames Water to request prompt removal of signs and clearer indication of diversions for residents and local businesses.

iii. **Website Update**

The Clerk requested the councillors give guidance on the future of the Parish Council website hosting and email.

The current setup uses separate email and website host providers which is not the easiest to use and costs just over £110 a year.

One option is to move the website to the current email provider which would be easier to manage as it would be in one package, but is more expensive at just under £200 per year.

The other option is to move everything to Parish Online, which is the most expensive at just under £350 per year, but is a more complete package that gives a ".gov.uk" domain and email addresses, a website using government design guidelines, ongoing maintenance and upgrades to align with legislation such as accessibility and they will migrate the old website across. An accessible website will become mandated in Oct 24, and it is expected that the ".gov.uk" domain and emails requirement will follow soon after.

The councillors agreed Parish Online appeared to be the most future proof option but requested that the Clerk ask Andrew Williams to check that the package being offered was reasonable as previously Parish Online's offerings had raised questions.

Clerk to liaise with Andrew Williams

iv. **Rural Housing Webinar 5 Feb**

The Clerk attended the webinar that was run by Community First Oxfordshire and detailed the help available to provide affordable housing for the community. It requires a Housing Needs Survey to be completed to establish the local need and interest, and if needed a suitable site would be required. This could be a site previously rejected for development as they could apply for it to be considered a Rural Exception Site, which would attract a lower sale value to ensure the housing remained affordable. The scheme currently ends in March 2025

Clerk to forward the Webinar slides to the councillors

(Post meeting note: Slides forwarded)

v. **Council Charter Event 6 Feb**

The Clerk attended the event at the Council Chambers in Witney.

OALC presented on Standards & Behaviours, Codes of Conduct, Advice & Training for Governance and Legislation and Roles & Responsibilities

WODC presented on Elections & Electoral Register, Election Notices, and key dates.

They also requested volunteers for paid work at the Polling Stations

OCC presented on the Council Charter, which is a living document that is voluntary but hoped to strengthen the partnership between OCC, WODC and the various Town and Parish Councils

Clerk to forward the presentation slides to the councillors

(Post meeting note: Slides forwarded)

vi. **Scott Gillam road marking**

Scott has completed his training and so can now mark defects, but only within the 30mph limits of the Parish. As he now has credentials to log in to Fix My Street it is hoped that if he reports any issues in the Parish but outside of the 30mph limit they may get better visibility.

vii. **Emergency Plan expected timeline**

It was confirmed earlier in the meeting that the Emergency Plan will be published in time to meet the April deadline for the survey and consent form completion.

viii. **Free portrait of HM King Charles**

The Clerk had received an email offering a free portrait of HM King Charles to Town, Parish and Community Councils. The councillors unanimously agreed that we should request one for the Village Hall

Clerk to request a portrait of HM King Charles

6. **Issues**

a. **New PC representative for Village Hall Committee**

Julie Williams briefed the councillors on the requirement for the Parish Council to have a representative on the Village Hall Committee. The current representative had expressed their desire to stand down as soon as possible so Graham Shelton agreed that the Parish Council would look for a new representative.

b. **Temporary Road Closure Notice T13178 Northmoor, Bablock Road 9 Mar 24, 07:00 to 17:00**

The Clerk notified the council of the forthcoming road closure believed to be due to the power upgrade at West View. It was noted that the notice included enhanced signage that showed diversions to reach either side of the closure.

Michael Ryan noted that the map had Bablock Road incorrectly named as Church Road.

Clerk to contact OCC and advise of incorrect road name.

c. **Play Park FCC grant application approval**

Julie Williams gave a brief update on the play park grant application which must be completed by 28 February 2024, in particular the requirement for the Parish Council to appoint an authorised signatory and have evidence that they have approved the application in the minutes.

The councillors unanimously approved the application and agreed that as the Clerk was the Responsible Officer, they should be the authorised signatory.

Clerk to forward minutes to Play Park Committee once approved, and sign application when required.

7. **Finance**

a. **Community First Membership**

The councillors unanimously agreed to renew the Parish Council's membership to Community First at a cost of £55.

Clerk to arrange payment once access to the account is finalised.

8. Planning Applications

a. **MW.0006/24 FCC Environment, for planning permission: Section 73 application to continue development approved under 13/1062/P/CM (MW.0097/13)**

To extend the end date of the existing Waste Transfer Facility from 31st March 2029 to 31st March 2050 and restoration from 31st December 2030 to 31st December 2051 at Dix Pit Waste Transfer Station.

The application was unanimously approved by the council.

Clerk to respond to OCC regarding the application

9. Correspondence and Any Other Business

a. **Robert Courts' email regarding sewage discharges**

This has been overtaken by events with the visit of Robert Courts to Bablock Hythe mentioned above.

b. **Proposed 20mph & 30mph limits**

The Clerk received an email regarding Pre-Consultation on the proposed alterations to the speed limits in the Parish. It was noted that the new proposal only changed the existing 40mph speed limit to 30mph and the existing 30mph to 20mph within the village, and it did not expand any limits to cover the other areas in the parish that currently have the national speed limit (Bablock Hythe, Moreton Lane and Park Farm Estate) as requested originally. Graham Shelton expressed his concerns with the proposal and agreed to draft an email for the Clerk to use as a response to OCC for the Pre-Consultation.

Graham Shelton to draft email regarding concerns on proposed speed limits

(Post meeting note: Email received and forwarded to OCC)

c. **Annual Parish Meeting**

It was agreed that a Parish Meeting should be held before the last meeting of the current Parish Council on Wed 10 April 2024. Julie Williams agreed to provide the Village Hall availability so that a suitable date could be agreed.

d. **Storage of historic Parish Council Documents**

Michael Ryan informed the council that he currently held a large number of historic documents from his time as Parish Clerk and would like to know what he should do with them. He suggested that, subject to the Village Hall Committee agreement, they could be held alongside the other historic documents in the Village Hall storeroom, or alternatively the Parish Council meeting minutes may be able to be stored in the County Council Archive at Cowley, but this would have to be confirmed.

Graham Shelton agreed that they were of great interest to the community and if possible should be retained in the Village Hall.

Juliet Druce offered to supply a 4 drawer filing cabinet that she was disposing of which should be large enough to hold all of the documents and take no more floorspace than the existing cupboard.

Julie Williams agreed to ask the Village Hall Committee if they were content for the documents to be kept in the storeroom.

(Michael also asked if the Clerk had received any correspondence from Pellmans Solicitors regarding the field being gifted from Hansons. The Clerk confirmed that he has not received anything from Pellmans).

e. **Email Scam**

Julie Williams informed the councillors that she had been involved in helping a resident after they had been subjected to a scam regarding a mobile phone. The resident had given Julie permission to share their experience with other parishioners to make them aware. Julie agreed to send an email to both village mailing lists.

10. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 13 March 2024 at 8:00pm

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9:35 pm.

Signed..... Date. 13 March 2024.

County Council report, Dan Levy 14 Feb 24

Key activity at County Hall has been handling the floods, preparing the budget and continuing the transformation of the service provided to children with special educational needs. In my role as Cabinet Member for finance, I have been coping with the failure of central government to provide the levels of funding it claimed it was providing, which meant that we had an even larger set of challenges than we had expected. We followed this by identifying savings and efficiencies we could make. The government then, last week, announced more money would be available, which is nice, but it would be better to have a system of funding that enabled sensible planning. The current methodology is shambolic, and councils of all political persuasions have been pointing this out. The budget meeting at County Hall is on 20 February.

Flooding

Although the Eynsham Division was mostly unscathed by the recent floods, with the exception of a few areas, other parts of the county were less fortunate. It is a wake up call about building in places that can't be kept dry. The response in West Oxfordshire was better than in some other places, in part because WODC takes a more active role working with Oxfordshire than other districts. There will be a cross-agency process to improve on our flood preparedness and responses.

As you will be very aware, one of the key places that did get flooded was the High St in Standlake.



Clearly something is wrong with the drainage system here. I have asked the flood team at the County Council to investigate. Our budget proposals include additional money for flood alleviation activity.

There has also been – again - issues in Northmoor, with Thames Water shutting the road for yet more repairs. The flooding at Bablockhythe is serious, and – as discussed at the last PC meeting – all the parties with an interest, including residents, site owner, Environment Agency, councils and fire service need to meet and discuss how to protect residents.

A40 update.

Homes England, who are the source or the bulk of the funding for the A40 scheme, are still in discussions with the County Council about the level and timing of that funding, and hence the project appearing to be making no progress. I share the frustration, not least because the Park and Ride is making such rapid progress. The whole scheme was over-ambitious, and it is a regret that when the current administration came into office it took over those plans rather than starting again from scratch.

Botley Road.

We are in continual discussion with Network Rail. We are told that the works are still on schedule to permit the reopening of Botley Road to motor vehicles in October.

Fix my Street.

It is very likely that the recent wet weather and the current cold spell will lead to an increase in the number and size of holes. Please use Fix my Street to report these. As mentioned frequently, we estimate that it would take around £45m per annum to keep the roads in a decent state. The government provides £20m. The Fix my Street website has been improved to make it easier to use.

I would welcome reports on whether the work to make the junction at Cow Corner safer has been effective.

Botley West Solar Farm

As you know, the current phase of consultation is reaching its conclusion. The County Council will be providing comments to the developer, as required. This will focus on those areas for which the County Council has primary responsibility, including highways and flooding. I think it safe to say that, among other things, it was noticeable that the consultation evidence provided by PVDP was inadequate. I was particularly unimpressed by the vagueness of cable routing options. The District Council will be the main local authority delivering evidence, although as we all know it is the planning inspectorate and central government which will decide the application.

It was disappointing to read in the local media untruths about the position of my party with regards to the Solar Farm. It is not supported by me or my party, and I know that other members of the party, including the MP for the place where the substation might be and our candidate for the new parliamentary constituency, have also made this clear. I don't normally include party politics in my reports as councillor, and hope this will continue to be possible.

As ever, please contact me on dan.levy@oxfordshire.gov.uk

District Councillor update, Charlie Maynard, 14 Feb 2024

Thames Water – as I write this, your local sewage treatment works at Standlake has been dumping sewage non-stop for 182 hours. Steve Barclay, the Environment Minister was going to attend a private meeting at Standlake village hall last Saturday 10th but cancelled. Residents have had their bills hiked, but shareholders and their bankers have not had to pay their share. Nor are the government's regulators ensuring that the water companies, Thames Water included, are doing what they need to do. I have still not received answers from Thames Water as to what monitors they have previously installed where and what data those monitors generated, nor have I received information on any plans to install monitors in the Standlake / Northmoor sewage network. Monitors matter as the catchment is large (Northmoor to Brixhampton), the network is old and the area is low lying. This leads to massive infiltration of groundwater into the network which quickly overpowers the treatment works. Monitors will tell us where are the worst leaks and therefore what to address first. Despite Standlake STW's woeful sewage dumping record, Thames Water has no public information as to any upgrade plans for this works, which means that there currently are no plans to upgrade this works before 2030. Terrible.

Local Plan consultation – the results of last year's Local Plan consultations are now public and available at this link - <https://meetings.westoxon.gov.uk/documents/g2258/Public%20reports%20pack%2014th-Feb-2024%2014.00%20Executive.pdf?T=10>. More than 2,000 responses were made. Residents gave their views see on the various Scenarios proposed. Aggregating online, email and letter responses, Scenario 8 focussing on locating development around public transport, particularly a new rail line, received approximately double the positive responses of the next nearest scenario. Importantly, many of the eight scenarios are complementary to each other and overlap. Focussing development around villages or village clusters garnered by far the most negative votes, perhaps predictably. Also of note are the list of ideas (p97 of the pdf link) for improving the district and the 126 site submissions by landowners and/or developers of where parties would like to develop. This is just a list of submissions received. In the next few weeks an online map will be made available of all the sites so that we can all see graphically where all these sites are.

A balanced budget – the district council has produced a budget with a very small surplus. Given the cuts to local government spending that's an impressive result.

Stacey Reed Report on Flooding at Bablock Hythe

Robert Courts <robert@robertcourts.co.uk>

Mon 12/02/2024 18:36

To:Stacey-L-reed@outlook.com <Stacey-L-reed@outlook.com>;janiceannjones@aol.com <janiceannjones@aol.com>;

reed.stacey1@googlemail.com <reed.stacey1@googlemail.com>

Cc:Lysette Nicholls <lysette.nicholls@westoxon.gov.uk>;Dane Bainbridge <dane.bainbridge@parliament.uk>

Dear Stacey and Janice,

It was good to see you both at your homes at the weekend, although I am very sorry that the reason for the meeting was your ongoing flooding issues. May I at the outset say how very sorry I am to see how the recent flooding continues to affect you, as I know it has in the past - and I know from Lysette that the water continues to rise as we speak.

May I, at the outset, introduce my caseworker, Dane, to whom I have assigned this case and will be "on hand" to help.

As discussed, I am proposing a number of actions for me which I wanted to record here in case I have not captured all the "takeaways" from our meeting - or if you have subsequently thought of any other ways in which I can help, please do let me know and I will take those up.

I am proposing to take the following urgent action:

1) Approach **Greenwood** as the ground leaseholders to find out what they are proposing to do to assist residents with the issues that we see, not least because they also have the leisure rental site next door which is currently completely flooded and closed.

On the assumption that they are the riparian owner of the drainage channel at the back of your homes, they should presumably be doing something to assist with maintenance/dredging etc.

They should also be replacing the fence for you at the back of your home (number 22) Stacey, in any event, as I understand it is theirs.

2) Approach **SSE** to point out that their substation is potentially close to water ingress with all the potential safety consequences that might have, and to ask them what they can do to assist - even if that is only with liaising with other agencies to get the improvements that we need;

3) Approach the **EA** again to cover the overall problem and to see what solutions they suggest to assist residents. It seems to me that they need to send us a hydrologist to tell us what is happening with the water. Some may be coming down from towards Stanton Harcourt, but some will be coming in from the Thames - or both. Either way, we need a solution to the problem.

It may be that a sluice is needed for that latter eventuality and if so then that is what I will push for. Equally there may be some work needed upstream - but I would prefer that we have an expert to tell us.

I know that the EA say it is for the riparian owners to take action but, whilst I am happy to approach them too, I do not think that the EA can turn away from this.

Let us see what they say regarding dredging - I don't think any of us will be very impressed by arguments about salmon season in the circumstances and clearly I won't accept any such.

4) We also mentioned my writing you a **letter of support to SSE for their generator grant** to cover emergencies - I am very happy to do that - please let me know what I can say, to who, that will be of the most assistance.

Finally, please never hesitate to let me know if I can help you in getting responses out of third parties, be it Greenwood or anyone else - you should always get a response and if I can help to extract one, I will.

And please do keep me posted with any photos or videos that might assist me in making the case to others, as things develop.

I hope I have covered everything from your perspective but, as I say, let me know if not.

All very best wishes and speak to you soon.

Yours

Robert

Robert Courts

Member of Parliament for Witney & West Oxfordshire

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Re: Flooding at Bablock Hythe

BAINBRIDGE, Dane <dane.bainbridge@parliament.uk>

Tue 13/02/2024 17:03

To: Robert Courts <robert@robertcourts.co.uk>; Stacey-L-reed@outlook.com <Stacey-L-reed@outlook.com>; janiceannjones@aol.com <janiceannjones@aol.com>; reed.stacey1@googlemail.com <reed.stacey1@googlemail.com>

Cc: Lysette Nicholls <lysette.nicholls@westoxon.gov.uk>

Dear Janice & Stacey,

I am very sorry to read of the difficulties you have had with flooding. I can certainly appreciate how concerning and frustrating this must be for residents at Thameside Court.

As Robert noted in his email, he has asked me to take the lead of this from our end and be assured that I will endeavour to help wherever I can.

I am just writing to you this afternoon to confirm that all of the below actions have been taken. Once we have further updates from Green Wood, the Environment Agency and SSE, I will be back in touch to keep you updated.

Please do continue to keep Robert's office apprised on this matter from your end and as ever, if there is anything Robert and his team can do to help please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Best wishes,

Dane

Dane Bainbridge | Parliamentary Caseworker

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