

**MINUTES OF DUCKLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 1 NOVEMBER 2023
in the Lilac Room, Village Hall commencing at 7.30 PM**

111.23 Parish Councillors Present: David Duthie (Chairman)
Matthew Barker (Vice Chairman)
Peter Almgill
Richard Border
John Dundson
Jo George
Paul Lishman
Sarah Varnom

In Attendance: Steve Smith (Clerk)

112.23 Parish Councillors' Apologies: None

113.23 To approve the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 4 October 2023 :

Cllr Barker proposed and Cllr Lishman seconded and the Council **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

114.23 County Council (OCC) / District Council (WODC) Matters:

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)

Cllr Ted Fenton was not able to attend, but prior to the meeting had sent an email to the Clerk and Chairman outlining a few points that may be of interest, as follows :

"As mentioned last month the "Fair Deal Alliance" that was in administration at OCC has broken up with the Labour group leaving the administration. There is a new cabinet of Lib Dem and Green members who are currently trying to run as a minority administration. The Council consists of three groups: Lib Dem/Green (24); Conservative/Independent (21); Labour and Co-operative (14) and three independent members not aligned with any group. Details of the new cabinet can be found on the OCC website at
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/about-your-council/oxfordshire-councillors/oxfordshires-cabinet>

The budget for next year is being prepared, given the fact that there is no overall control this is likely to be an even more difficult process than usual.

The controversy regarding the LTNs in Oxford goes on with the new cabinet having decided to make permanent the East Oxford ones which were temporary although replacing at least some

of the fixed bollards with ANPR cameras. There is a Conservative motion before Council for the 7th November meeting seeking to reverse that decision. It all depends on which way the Labour and independent members vote as to whether it will succeed.

There has been some extra funding from the national government to enable the cap on bus fares to continue for the rest of the year.

There has been a warning put out to residents regarding cold callers offering to do property repairs following an increase in complaints about poor work and overcharging. The Head of Trading Standards has advised "Don't agree to offers of building work, home repairs or maintenance that come from a cold call. Don't be afraid to say no, don't be pressured and check with others if the work is required and what is a fair price to pay. If it's out of the blue, it's not for you! I encourage people to 'take five' – stop and take a moment and think, do I really need this work done? Obtain other quotes and seek advice, and recommendations for trades people from friends and relatives. I would also encourage getting three quotes from different traders before you agree to any work being done."

Cllr Ted Fenton has made further enquiries regarding the pipe lining that needs to be done and has got nowhere. He is currently the Chair of the Witney and Carterton Locality meeting and he brought up the matter of certain officers failing to respond satisfactorily to requests both from county councillors and from Parish Councils using this as a specific example. An OCC senior officer (Rob MacDougall, Chief Fire Officer) was concerned to hear about it and has undertaken to make some enquiries and take action to improve the communications.

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC)

Nothing to report. Cllr Adrian Walsh was not present and had not submitted a written report prior to the meeting.

115.23 Parish Councillors - Disclosure of interests on agenda items

Cllr George declared an interest in agenda item 9) concerning Sports Pavilion and Sports Field matters as she is a committee member of Ducklington Sports Club.

No other interests were declared.

116.23 PLANNING

Applications:

Application No: **23/02475/HHD** - 23 Beanhill Road, Ducklington - Removal of existing conservatory and lean to canopy. Conversion of existing loft space to create first floor accommodation and erection of a single storey rear extension

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Councillors discussed this application and **RESOLVED** to make no comments and raise no objections.

Application No: **22/02425/FUL** - Land part of Mistral, Witney Road, Ducklington - Construction of detached dwelling with detached garage. New driveway and associated boundary treatments.

Planning Appeal and Costs Decision - Appeal allowed. Costs refused.

Councillors noted the outcome of the planning appeal for this development

Oxfordshire County Council Planning Reference **R3.0142/23** - Planning Application by Oxfordshire County Council for planning permission pursuant to Section 73 of T&CP Act 1990 to continue the development permitted by R3.0039/22 (construction of two new west-facing slip roads at the Shores Green junction of the A40 etc.) without complying with conditions 1 and 18 in order to replace a proposed shared-use path with a footway, merge two balancing ponds into one, re-align a drainage ditch, extend the highway boundary and make amendments to the landscaping scheme to include additional planting at A40/B4022 Shores Green Junction

The above application has been submitted to Oxfordshire County Council for determination.

Councillors discussed this application and **RESOLVED** to raise no objections.

Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Lishman reported on feedback from the village consultation event held in the Sports Club on Thursday, 12th October insofar as it relates to the proposed neighbourhood plan. The event was well attended and there were lots of comments and engagement from members of the public. The feedback was mostly positive and the ideas presented by the parish council were generally well received.

West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041

Cllr Lishman reported he had drafted the parish council's response to the consultation (which is reproduced below) and the Clerk confirmed it had been submitted to and acknowledged by WODC. It is expected that a more detailed version of the draft West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 will be prepared and further consultations will take place next year.

Members expressed their gratitude to Cllr Lishman for his expertise and all his hard work and **RESOLVED** to give a vote of thanks, which was carried unanimously.

Cllr Barker reported that he had attended the Town and Parish workshop organised by WODC on Wednesday, 18th October.

Representations by Ducklington Parish Council

“Ducklington Parish Council are pleased to comment on the above Local Plan Consultation.

Having reviewed the 30 key objectives, these are all worthy aspirations which the Parish Council broadly supports.

We particularly welcome Objective 19 ‘To empower and enable local communities to positively shape and influence the future of their area from the ‘grass roots’ up’, and the reference to the important role of Neighbourhood Planning in giving local communities the power to shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development. Ducklington Parish Council is currently in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan and we look forward to working with WODC to bring this to fruition.

In terms of the growth scenarios, Ducklington Parish Council supports Option 1 - Hierarchical Approach, which would see development directed at the main towns / services centres, and with some limited village development. We consider this to be the most appropriate strategy as towns and services centres offer the biggest range of services and facilities. Development in villages is important to maintain vitality / diversity and provide much needed affordable housing, but there needs to be proper consideration of local context and environmental constraints. This includes avoiding coalescence with neighbouring settlements.

Specifically in the case of Ducklington, proximity to Witney to the north; the flood zone to the east (the extent of which is currently being reviewed by the Environment Agency); and A415 to the west contains the settlement and limits opportunities for any substantial growth.

In terms of the other growth scenarios:

A strategy for growth of main town / services centres only (Options 2, 3 and 4) would need to be carefully considered to ensure towns do not result in the coalescence of nearby villages (such as the risk of coalescence between Witney and Ducklington) or are harmful to the surrounding countryside.

A strategy for dispersed growth only (Option 5) would also need to be carefully considered, and development in villages should be appropriate to local character / context and have full regard to environmental constraints.

We do not necessarily object to the strategy for Village Clusters (Option 6) but conclude that Ducklington has no obvious relationship to nearby villages / would not form a logical cluster. The nearest settlement is Witney and it is important that any further coalescence is avoided.

We do not necessarily object to the strategy for a New Settlement (Option 7) providing this was sensitively located and did not harm the character and setting of any existing West Oxfordshire towns and villages.

We welcome the consideration of a Public Transport focused growth (Option 8) – i.e. around key routes and hubs – subject to careful consideration of the character and setting of any towns /

villages that may be affected. We also support the ongoing investigation of the Carterton – Oxford rail line, which has the potential to assist with capacity issues along the A40.

We do wish to ensure the preferred growth strategy is underpinned by clear and robust evidence regarding housing demand and gives proper consideration of local need, and we assume that this evidence will be made available in due course.

We also remain concerned that there is insufficient sewerage capacity in the local area. This is a well-documented issue in West Oxfordshire, and we are aware conditions are being attached to planning permissions to ensure the necessary infrastructure is in place before new houses are occupied. We would welcome information in the next iteration of the Local Plan as to how housing allocations align with measures to increase sewerage capacity.

We do hope that these comments are useful in helping shape the growth strategy for West Oxfordshire, and we would appreciate being kept up to date as Local Plan 2041 progresses.”

The Moors

Cllr Barker updated members on progress :

The Moors has been re-classified by the Environment Agency as Flood Zone 3 (High Risk of Flooding) following representations made by WODC councillors and officers, as a result of Cllr Barker supplying recent and historic evidence of flooding on The Moors, supported by photographs from members of the public.

The resulting update to the Flood Map for Planning to be published later in the year will mean any future applications for development will need to take the updated flood risks into account.

Cllr Barker reminded members that the applicant has until January 2025 to submit a full planning application in respect of the Moors and such application will have to take account of the heightened risk of flooding on the site.

Members expressed their gratitude to Cllr Barker for his sterling work and **RESOLVED** to give a vote of thanks, which was carried unanimously.

117.23 Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

a) Oxford Witney Hotel update

Cllr Varnom reported that a multi-agency standing committee meeting is due to take place on Thursday, 2nd November.

She reported that WODC has appointed Sally Heath to co-ordinate the work of the volunteers.

Volunteers are encouraging various community events, including creative English and arts and crafts.

The UK government has announced that the number of hotels used to house asylum seekers is to be cut by 50 over the next three months, with more tranches to follow. Oxford Witney Hotel is not one of them and it is not known whether it will be included in subsequent tranches.

Cllr Varnom will again raise the issue of charity bags left outside homes being opened by people from the hotel, items being taken and discarded items strewn in hedgerows around the village, but admitted it is proving difficult to prevent this happening. She is aware that many households are choosing to donate items direct to charity shops instead.

b) **Lidl - Traffic Sign update**

Cllr Barker advised councillors that OCC had installed a pole on the A415 to which the new SID can be mounted and councillors **RESOLVED** to instruct the Clerk to issue a purchase order to Morelock for the supply and installation of a Morelock Speed Indicator Device (M-SID), which is a battery operated sign (including a spare battery), in the sum of £2846 plus £250 installation cost.

c) **CCTV Camera Log**

Cllr George reported there had been no incidents on the CCTV log this month. Cllr Almgill agreed to prepare a template for a CCTV log and to put it on Google Drive.

d) **School Cup**

Cllr Almgill reported that due to pressure of work the headteacher at the school (who is currently running the school without a deputy) has not yet acquired a 3D printer or come up with an idea for awarding the cup as a prize.

Councillors **RESOLVED** that if no further progress was made within the next month the council would withdraw its commitment to spend up to £250 on the printer and pursue other options.

e) **Annual Risk Assessment**

Nothing further to report.

f) Annual Review of Internal Controls

This item was carried forward to the next meeting.

g) Annual Investment Policy Review

This item was carried forward to the next meeting.

h) Village Newsletter update

Councillors noted and approved the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack regarding items to be included in the next edition of the village newsletter.

Cllr Varnom offered to help with proofreading the next edition of the newsletter.

The Clerk was instructed to ask the editor to send him a pdf version of the newsletter and arrange for the current and future editions of the newsletter to be put on the parish council website.

i) Collaborative Working with Neighbouring Parish Councils

Cllr Barker reported he has had informal meetings with councillors from South Leigh and High Cogges Parish Council who were generally supportive of the proposal to collaborate and share expertise amongst neighbouring parish councils.

Cllr Almgill also reported he is to meet with the chair of Standlake Parish Council.

j) Tree Condition Survey

After a short discussion Cllr Varnom proposed and Cllr Border seconded and councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** to instruct the Clerk to accept the quote from Oxford Direct Services (ODS) and to issue a purchase order to ODS to carry out a condition survey of the trees at Bartholomew Close Picnic Area, Peel Close through to Lovell Close Grass Area, Chalcroft Play Area, and Ducklington Sports Field, at a cost of £630.00 plus VAT.

k) Finance Committee Terms of Reference & Procedures

Nothing further to report. This item was carried forward to the next meeting.

l) Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

Cllr Duthie apologised to councillors that the AGAR has still not been prepared and submitted to the external auditor in accordance with legal requirements, and proposes to send all papers to the council's internal auditor this week.

118.23 New Business

a) OALC Training - Roles and Responsibilities

After a short discussion Cllr Varnom proposed and Cllr Almgill seconded and councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve the Clerk's request, and to authorise payment of the course fee and travelling expenses, and to instruct the Clerk to book a place on the above training event taking place on Thursday, 18th January 2024 at Great Western Park District Community Centre, Gentian Mews, Didcot, OX11 6GR.

b) Ducklington Apple Pressing Day

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack. After a discussion Cllr Dundson proposed and Cllr Border seconded and councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** that the event organiser should retain £100 to cover his expenses and to request that he considers donating the remaining funds to the Village Fund. Councillors also **RESOLVED** to approve the provisional date for next year's Apple Pressing Day, namely Sunday, 20 October 2024, and to instruct the Clerk to send to the event organiser the council's hire application form for completion and to obtain evidence of public liability insurance for the steam engine and the apple mill which it will be driving; such insurance to be in the sum of £5 million any one claim, and an up to date risk assessment plan.

Cllr Duthie confirmed that as from Monday, 1 January 2024 the council's new hire application form is to be implemented for the hire and use of all Parish Council facilities and a £25.00 deposit to be applied to all bookings. Known hirers to be informed.

c) The Children's Air Ambulance Service

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack. Councillors are supportive of the Children's Air Ambulance Service (CAAS) and are more than happy to share information about the service on the council's website and in the village newsletter.

Councillors also suggested that CAAS could perhaps be invited to have a stall or collection at the flower show and apple pressing day to raise awareness about their cause.

Generally speaking, councillors were keen to explore the idea of formulating specific procedures or guidelines for supporting charitable organisations, rather than merely responding to ad hoc requests.

d) Community First Oxfordshire AGM

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack. Cllr Lishman expressed an interest in attending the talk by Katy Lock, Director of Communities at The Town and Country Planning Association, on the long-term stewardship of community assets, if time permits.

e) Village Christmas Tree

As in previous years, Cllr Barker agreed to ask Tom Davies to source a Christmas tree at a cost of c.£140, and to obtain a new weatherproof outdoor electrical connection box at an additional cost of c.£40. Councillors **RESOLVED** to authorise Cllr Barker to spend up to £200 on the project.

f) Remembrance Wreath

Again as in previous years, Cllr Duthie agreed to acquire a wreath on behalf of the parish council to be laid at the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday to commemorate all the British, Commonwealth and Allied Forces who served, at a cost of no more than £25.00. Councillors agreed that Cllr Varnom shall be permitted to lay the wreath this year.

g) Village Event and feedback to date

Cllr Lishman reported on the Village Consultation Event which was held on 12th October to share the council's thoughts on the emerging Neighbourhood Plan; potential 20mph speed limit in the village; the proposed sensory garden and art trail; and ideas for improving sustainability in the village. Smith Bletchington were also in attendance to update on quarry proposals, and our local PCSOs also attended to introduce themselves and to discuss local crime issues.

The event was very well attended, and there was lots of interesting feedback.

Cllr Lishman circulated an outline of parishioners' comments and highlighted recurring themes, summarised as follows :

Community Facilities : a number of people (4) support a shop / tea room and/or a community run shop.

Sensory Garden and Art Trail : a number of people (7) oppose a sensory garden on the grounds it won't be maintained and/or could be vandalised.

Roads : a number of people (5) raised concerns about inconsiderate parking near the school, war memorial and opposite the village car park. A similar number of people (5) felt that 20 mph should only be introduced around the school. A number of people (8) expressed the view that the speed limit on the A415 outside the village should be 50 mph, and a number of people (2) commented on the need to resurface roads and/or repair potholes in the village.

The Clerk confirmed that the exhibition material is now on the parish council website for people to look at and comment on.

h) Use of images in any Parish publications, including newsletter

Cllr Lishman advised that the council should avoid using images in parish publications, including the newsletter, where it does not have the permission of the copyright owner to do so. The express permission of the copyright owner must be obtained to use photographs, illustrations and other images in the newsletter and/or before sharing on the internet.

Cllr Almgill pointed out that consent is deemed to be given to take pictures of people in public places and if you have created the image yourself, e.g. taken a photograph, you are generally free to use that image as you wish.

i) Proposed articles for newsletter - summary of village event / next steps AND the 20mph proposals / inviting residents to express their views

Cllr Lishman agreed to write an article for the next edition of the newsletter.

j) Climate & Ecology Bill

Cllr George proposed and Cllr Varnom seconded and councillors voted unanimously to pass the following motion :

Climate & Ecology Bill motion

Preamble

Humans have already caused irreversible climate change, the impacts of which are being felt in the UK, and across the world. The average global temperature has already increased by 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels and—alongside this—the

natural world has reached crisis point, with 28% of plants and animals threatened with extinction. In addition, the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world as more than one in seven of our plants and animals face extinction, and more than 40% are in decline.

Climate change remains a major concern for UK voters with 66% of people (according to YouGov) expressing they are 'worried about climate change and its effects'. Alongside this, the popularity of Sir David Attenborough's Save Our Wild Isles initiative demonstrates public concern that UK wildlife is being destroyed at a terrifying speed.

Climate & Ecology Bill

The Climate & Ecology Bill, a private member's bill currently before the House of Commons, seeks to address the challenges that this situation poses by creating a whole-of-government approach to deliver a net zero and nature positive future.

Based on the latest science, the CE Bill aims to align current UK environmental policy with the need to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030, which was goal agreed to at COP15, via the Kunming-Montreal Framework (22 December 2022); and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the UK's fair share of the remaining global carbon budget to give the strongest chance of limiting global heating to 1.5°C, which was the goal agreed to at COP21, via the Paris Agreement (12 December 2015).

By bridging the gap between the UK Government's current delivery, and what has been agreed at international levels, Britain has a chance to be a world leader on climate and the environment; seizing the opportunities of the clean energy transition, including green jobs and skills; reduced energy bills; and boosting the UK's food and energy security.

Ducklington Parish Council notes that:

The Climate and Ecology Bill has been introduced in the UK Parliament on four occasions since 2020, including most recently in the House of Commons 10 May 2023. The Bill is backed by 180 cross-party MPs and Peers, 237 local authorities, alongside the support of eminent scientists, such as Sir David King; NGOs, such as the Wildlife Trusts, the Doctors' Association, Oxfam, the W.I. and CPRE; businesses, such as The Co-operative Bank, Riverford and The Body Shop; and 42,000 members of the public.

The CE Bill would require the UK Government to develop and achieve a new environmental strategy, which would include:

1. Delivering a joined-up environmental plan, as the crises in climate and nature are deeply intertwined, and require a plan that considers both together;
2. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with 1.5°C to ensure emissions are

reduced in line with the best chance of meeting the UK's Paris Agreement obligations;

3. Not only halting, but also reversing the decline in nature, setting nature measurably on the path to recovery by 2030;
4. Taking responsibility for our overseas footprint, both emissions and ecological;
5. Prioritising nature in decision-making, and ending fossil fuel production and imports as rapidly as possible;
6. Providing for re-training for those people currently working in fossil fuel industries; and
7. Giving the British people a say in finding a fair way forward via a temporary, independent and representative Climate & Nature Assembly, as part of creating consensus and ensuring that no one and no community is left behind.

Ducklington Parish Council therefore **RESOLVES** to:

1. Support the Climate and Ecology Bill;
2. Inform local residents and inform local press/media of this decision;
3. Write to Robert Courts MP to inform him that this motion has been passed, and urge him to sign up to support the CE Bill—or thank him for already doing so;
4. Write to Zero Hour, the organisers of the cross-party campaign for the CE Bill, expressing Ducklington Parish Council's support (councils@zerohour.uk).

k) Art Trail - Application to use s106 monies

After a discussion Cllr George proposed and Cllr Dundson seconded and the council **RESOLVED** to proceed with the art trail and to apply to WODC to utilise s106 monies.

119.23 Playgrounds, Sports Field, Open Spaces, Sports Club and Allotments

a) RoSPA Play Safety Inspection

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack and **RESOLVED** to instruct the Clerk to obtain quotations to carry out the remedial tasks identified in the Annual Safety Inspection Reports prepared by RoSPA Play Safety Limited with priority according to the risk level set out therein.

b) Litter Picker's Report

Councillors noted the litter picker's report as set out in the Briefing Pack.

c) MUGA Information Board

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack. The Clerk reported verbally that the work had been satisfactorily completed and Cllr George and the Clerk each held a key to the lockable poster case.

d) Sports Field / Bartholomew Close - Hedge Cutting

Cllr Duthie agreed to ascertain the reason why the hedges around the Sports Field had not been cut and to check if the hedges at Bartholomew Close had been cut and to report back to the next meeting.

e) Sports Field - Fertilisation / Weed Killer

Cllr George agreed to ask the Sports Club for further information as councillors were under the impression that ground works such as this would be covered by the FA grant awarded to the Sports Club.

Cllr George raised the issue of the slippery surface of the footbridge affording access to and egress from the Sports Field to Standlake Road and vice versa. Cllr Lishman commented that he was aware of the problem as he had slipped on it himself. Cllr Almgill offered to purchase some anti slip treads at a cost not exceeding £20 for which the council **RESOLVED** to reimburse him. Cllr Almgill said that he and his sons will affix the anti slip treads when received.

f) Repairs - Village Green / Glebelands Play Area

Councillors noted the Clerk's report and recommendation in the Briefing Pack. After a discussion councillors **RESOLVED** to instruct the Clerk to obtain two more quotes for the repairs in addition to the quote from C.J.M Services and to report back to a future meeting.

120.23 FINANCE

a) **Account Balances, Bank reconciliations and Debts due to Council**

Cllr Duthie advised members of the sums currently held in the Council's bank accounts.

b) **Invoices due for payment**

Councillors considered the schedule of proposed payments set out in the Briefing Pack and **RESOLVED** that all be paid.

Cllr Barker and Cllr Almgill signed the cheques.

c) **Budget 2024/25**

Cllr Duthie reported that the council is facing increased costs and will need to maximise income from council assets if it is to avoid having to make a significant increase in the precept.

121.23 **Other comments/Matters for next Agenda**

- a) Cllr Barker commented that he had received complaints about the low branches on a tree at the junction of Beanhill Close and Curbridge Road.
- b) Cllr Dundson admonished the Clerk for using the verb "bemoaned" in correspondence with a third party to describe comments made by a councillor in a previous meeting. The Clerk replied he had no wish to offend any councillor and apologised unreservedly for using that particular verb.
- c) Cllr George gave a quick round-up on various matters : she has contacted WODC about bins not being taken in by resident(s); there is still no date for the Village Hall Committee AGM, and she is still waiting to hear from WODC about EV charging points.

122.23 **Date of Next Meeting:**

Parish Council Meeting, 6 December 2023 - 7.30 pm, Lilac Room of the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 10.00 pm.

Signeddated.....2023
Chairman