

East Hagbourne Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting duly convened and held on Thursday 11th February 2016 at East Hagbourne Pavilion, East Hagbourne

1) Attendance, apologies, declarations of pecuniary interest and vacancies.

Present: Cllrs D. Rickeard(Chairman), C. Gover, J. Elliott, I. Duff, C. Topping and D. Button.

In attendance: L. Dalby (Clerk).

County Cllr Greene sent his apologies for absence.

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

2) Public Forum and Questions.

There was none.

3) Reports from County Councillor and District Councillor.

District Cllr J. Murphy's report see Appendix 2.

County Cllr P. Greene's report see Appendix 3.

4) Confirmation of the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 14th January 2016.

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th January were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

5) Actions from previous meetings.

2015-11-05 – Cllrs Gover and Rickeard to discuss the webhosting service with the webmaster.

2015-12-01 – Cllr Topping has spoken with the owner of the Main Road Orchard. It was agreed to consider protecting the site through the Neighbourhood Plan.

2016-01-07 – Cllr Gover will ask the Pub if they have any plans for the Queen's Birthday Celebrations. The Clerk will contact West Hagbourne PC to ask if they would consider pooling the available grant from SODC for a joint firework display.

6) Items for Discussion/Decision.

a) Clarification of Section 137 provisions

The Clerk confirmed that the total expenditure available under s137 for 2015/16 was £7,065.60. £731.78 has already been spent leaving £6333.82 for this financial year.

b) Consequences of withdrawal of bus subsidies.

See briefing notes Appendix 4.

Until the County Council budget has been agreed the situation remains unclear however the Parish Council could consider contributing to the 131 service which runs to Wallingford twice a week. It may also be possible to ask the Parish Charities for a donation.

The Clerk has confirmed that the Dial-a-Ride service is not used by any residents of East Hagbourne.

c) To consider a request for a grant towards building repairs from the PCC.

A request has been received from the PCC for a donation towards the church building repairs. All councillors were in support in principal of donating a sum. The amount to be donated was discussed in the light of the expected balance on the General Reserve Fund of £4,827 at the end of the 2015/6 financial year and also in the light of the fact that the Precept set for 2016/7 was in expectation that the net expenses of EHPC would be covered with no surplus arising. Cllr Button proposed an initial donation of £1000 with the option of a further donation next year once the Council's financial position was clearer with regard to upcoming expenses such as the Pavilion Car Park.

Cllr Duff proposed a donation of £2000.

It was resolved to donate £2000 to the church repair fund (3 in favour, 2 against and 1 abstention).

d) Information on Cemetery trees.

The Clerk reported that she had met with the Church Warden and three tree surgeons to discuss the Cemetery Trees. Potential work will be discussed at the Cemetery Committee Meeting.

The responsibility for grass cutting and maintenance in the churchyard also needs to be clarified.

e) To review progress with the Pavilion

BDS has completed actions A – C as agreed at the last meeting and submitted a planning application for an improved 'grasscrete' surface to the car park. The scheme was discussed and it was resolved to engage BDS to design and supervise these improvements to the car park. It will be necessary to apply for grants or a loan to complete the work and to check the conditions of potential funders regarding requirements for tendering.

The electrical works will be carried out soon and the annual checks are progressing.

The Recreation Ground committee will consider the request for a paved path to the playground.

f) New Road Development

i) Status of communications with SODC

(1) Replies to our letters

There has been no response to the letter sent to SODC Planning in December. The Clerk will ask for confirmation that the letter has been received.

(2) Response to second consultation

The Parish Council resolved to object to the amended application.

(3) Readiness for SODC Planning Committee

The date for the meeting has not yet been set but Mind the Green Gap is making preparations.

7) Items for Report

a) Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan has been launched with a successful public meeting attended by two SODC Neighbourhood Planning Officers. The newly formed steering group has walked around and codified a map of the Parish.

The next steps are to form a budget and set a time line.

The Clerk will confirm the result of the initial boundary consultation.

8) Correspondence.

Litter Blitz, Saturday 23rd April.

OCVA – Volunteers Day – Cllr Rickeard to attend.

Neighbourhood Plan Training – Cllr Topping to attend

SODC – Chairman's Charity Dinner

9) Finance.

a) Expenditure and receipts since the last meeting and account balances.

i) Payments for Approval:-

Andy Barmer	Neighbourhood Plan Website Expenses	64.63
EHSRC	Room Hire	27.50
BGG	Garden and Tree Care Hedge Cutting	270.00
BDS Surveyors Ltd	Pavilion Car Park	1176.00
L. Dalby	Clerk's Salary	413.40
EHSRC	Room Hire	50.00

ii) Payment made between meetings

SODC	Planning Application	97.50
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iii) Receipts

Hagbourne PCC		4.00
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iv) The account balances are:-

Community A/C – 5th February 2016	£38044.96
Base Rate Tracker A/C – 31st December 2015	£2,101.61

East and West Hagbourne Cemetery	
Community A/C – 23rd November 2015	£2796.62
Business Saver A/C – 31st December 2015	£841.98

b) Appointment of Internal Auditor

Cllr Button will distribute the terms of reference for the internal auditor. Cllrs Button and Duff will meet with a potential candidate.

c) Status of Cheque Signatories

Forms were completed to add Cllr Elliott.

10) Items for report and inclusion on the March agenda.

- APM
- Allotment Report

There being no further business the meeting was declared closed at 9.55pm.

Signed.....Dated.....

Appendix 1: Actions from previous meetings

ACTION NO	WHAT	WHO	STATUS
2015-09-03	Pavilion and Bakers Lane Signs	LD	Requested
2015-10-04	Highways – lines and signs	LD	On Hold
2015-10-05	Highways Services	LD	On Hold
2015-10-06	New Dog Bins	LD	Requested
2015-11-04	Reposition Defibrillator	LD	Letter sent
2015-11-05	Web Hosting Service	CG/DR	
2015-11-06	Internal Auditor	DB/ID	
2016-01-01	Kingsholme Close support email	LD	
2016-01-05	Car Park Drainage	DR	
2016-01-06	Pavilion Electrical Work	DR/L	Work requested
2016-01-07	Queen's 90 th Birthday Celebrations	All	
2016-01-08	Cheque Signatures	LD	
2016-02-01	New Rd Development Letter and Response	LD	
2016-02-02	Neighbourhood Plan Consultation	LD	
2016-02-03	OCVA Volunteers Day Response	LD	

Appendix 2 District Councillors Report

SODC A Conservative District Councillor's View (Or What The Council Is Doing) January 2016

On behalf of all of our District Council colleagues, we hope that you all had a good Christmas and we wish you a prosperous and happy 2016.

Things are not going to get any easier economically as a result of the continuing global economic climate, but here at SODC Officers and Members have been working to get the maximum value for money and we are now in a position to honour our election pledge not to raise our element of the Council Tax. So, for 2016/17, this will remain at the same level as the current year.

Corporate Services Project

This piece of work plays a crucial part in helping us to keep our part of the Council Tax frozen and the Report compiled by the Team working on this has been examined by our Scrutiny Committee which has recommended that Cabinet agrees the proposals. Five councils including ours will combine with two providers to manage and deliver our services and if all agree to the recommendations, our District will save £8 million over the nine year course of the contract. More on this next month!

Constitution Review

The Panel has continued with its work, and, along with the simplification of the Scrutiny and Officer Employment Processes which have already been implemented, the work on rules governing Contracts, Council Procedures and the Petition Scheme have now been completed.

Policing

We continue to work with Police And Crime Commissioner Anthony Stansfeld to get the best value for money possible whilst maintaining and improving standards. Following the Home Office's change in its funding proposals, as announced by the Chancellor in in Autumn Statement, the Budget proposals for the coming year have been revised and are now in the scrutiny process.

For Thame Valley policing, one area of significant concern is the growth in cybercrime. Whilst this is a National issue, we all need to be vigilant, and an initiative has been launched which will help our residents. We urge all Councils and the public to be aware of the Cyber Crime Awareness initiative and to visit Cyber STREETWISE at www.cyberstreetwise.com/ and we ask you to do everything you can to spread the work.

Grants

The next window for grants opens in February. It runs from 1 February to 1 April 2016 for decisions by 10 July 2016 and as we have made changes to this process to make it easier to apply for Grants and obtain the funds to support projects, we hope that our communities will make full use of the opportunity this presents. The Working Group has met to determine the way we will handle the funds available following the withdrawal of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, and an announcement on this will be made in the near future.

The Council's Home

As the Anniversary of the fire at Crowmarsh passed, there was a great deal of speculation in the press about the location of our new, permanent home. Work on this continues and for the time being, all we can say at is that it is very unlikely that we will be returning to the old site. On the basis of progress to date we expect an announcement during May or June this year.

Planning

We've just set up a new register for people interested in building their own property - this will help us get an idea of how much local interest there is in self-build, which will help us write our planning policies. Whilst we're not currently aware of any plots of land that are available for self-build, the register will help us match people up with suitable plots of land should they become available in the future. This can be found on our web site; you just need to search for 'Custom Build Register'.

The planning inspector has approved our Community Infrastructure Levy schedule subject to a few minor amendments and this will go to cabinet early this year.

Work continues apace across our District on Neighbourhood Planning with more communities starting work on a plan and we will continue to provide the best support that we can with this piece of work.

Didcot Garden Town

Didcot and the surrounding areas are set to get major infrastructure funding to help with the delivery of 15,000 new homes and 10,000 new high-tech jobs in both our District and the Vale.

Housing and Planning minister, Brandon Lewis MP visited the town to announce that our joint bid for Garden Town status for Didcot was successful; this will pave the way for improvements like a northern perimeter road for the town and the 'Science Bridge' over the railway line into Milton Park, as well as improvements to existing areas of Didcot.

Community Safety News

Some businesses caught serving alcohol to underage children in Wallingford have tightened up their act thanks to training from the Community Safety Partnership.

In August, the partnership sent people under 18 years old into five premises to try and buy alcohol, and three of them failed to ask them for ID.

The staff were given training and in a re-test in October, all five premises successfully checked IDs and refused to serve the young people.

Winter weather

To help people prepare for the inevitable rain, wind and snow this winter we've updated the advice on our [South](#) severe weather pages. The county council has also produced a Winter guide, [which you can see here](#).

Armed Forces Covenant

We have a significant Military presence in our District, not only with RAF Benson, but also with Services Family Accommodation in Didcot for Dalton Barracks in Abingdon, and residents from St David's and St George's Barracks across the border at Bicester, and RAF Halton and Air Command (formerly Strike Command) in Buckinghamshire.

The Council signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant a few years ago and we have commenced work on a 'refresh' to our approach to meeting this commitment.

This is just a brief summary of the work we are doing, and our thanks to our roving reporter, Stephen Harrod, District and County Member, for his contributions this month.

Editors - Cllr Ian White (ian.r.white@btinternet.com), Cllr Toby Newman (Toby.Newman@southoxon.gov.uk)

Appendix 3 – County Councillors Report

BUDGET

As reported last month, prior to Christmas, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) went out to consultation on possible additional budget cuts totalling £51m, which at the time was believed to be the worst-case scenario. It was hoped that when central Government confirmed the local government settlement that not all the 95 savings measures consulted on would have to be taken. As it transpired, due to a change in the funding formula which unexpectedly penalised shire counties, the settlement was even worse than expected and the total additional savings required now total £69m.

Councillor Ian Hudspeth, the leader of OCC, said: "The clear message from our budget consultation in the Autumn was that making proposed savings would have a real impact on people and communities. We had hoped our original savings options would be a worst-case scenario and that we would not therefore have to go ahead with them all. We are desperately sorry that we now have to consider all these savings, but will be doing everything we can to help communities manage the impact. We have found a series of short-term measures, including drawing on reserves, to buy time before we have to make yet more new savings to cover the difference between £51m and £69m. Our approach remains the same: we want to try to protect the most vulnerable people in Oxfordshire – by which we mean those adults who need help with basic personal care and children at risk of abuse or neglect."

By law, OCC has to produce a balanced budget and Cabinet has made the necessary recommendations that will be debated by Full Council on February 16th. This includes a proposal to raise Council Tax by 3.99%.

PROPERTY, BACK OFFICE AND RESERVES

There have been misleading media reports that OCC could reduce its financial challenges by selling property, cutting the back office and drawing on reserves. The reality is that OCC has already sold more than 100 properties realising over £62 million that has been used on capital projects. Furthermore, 26 leases have been terminated saving over £2.1 million pa. With regard to back office functions, the number of directors has been cut by 50%, senior managers by over 40% and staff generally by 30%. Various services are already shared with other councils and partners, and further options are being explored to find even more back office savings. Reserves are already being drawn upon and will soon become low compared to expenditure.

BACKLASH AGAINST SHIRE COUNTIES SETTLEMENT

Up to 50 MPs are understood to have signed a letter demanding changes to the Government's proposed settlement with local government, which was published last month. The letter calling for shire councils to be given more money has been sent to the Communities Secretary, Greg Clarke, before a final deal is laid before the Commons within the next fortnight. The Government insists the proposal is a good deal because it also allows local authorities to set their own business rates and increase council tax to make up the shortfall. But one Conservative MP said: "There are a lot of us who are absolutely furious about this. We accept the need for cuts, but it's about fairness. How can it be right that rural councils are facing cuts of 33 per cent, but urban areas – where it is cheaper to provide services – are facing a reduction of just 19 per cent? In Wales, it's just 8 per cent and Scotland 4 per cent." If you agree that this harsh treatment of rural councils is unfair please write to your MP and complain.

RISE OF APPRENTICES BOOSTS THRIVING OXFORDSHIRE ECONOMY

Recent growth in the number of Oxfordshire young people choosing apprenticeships as the key to forging a career is outstripping regional figures. While the number of apprenticeship starts for 16-24 year-olds fell across the South East by 2.5 per cent in 2014/15 compared with the previous academic year, Oxfordshire's figure rose by 2.4 per cent, as employers took on 2,510 new starters.

TEMPORARY NEW HOME FOR OXFORD CENTRAL LIBRARY

Continuing work to transform the Westgate Shopping Centre in Oxford has led to OCC's Central Library temporarily moving to a nearby location. Redevelopment work at Westgate includes the complete transformation of the front of the current library building. The existing frontage of the Central Library will be replaced to become part of the new curving wall forming the south side of Bonn Square marking the new entrance to Westgate. Once complete, the new library will feature a new entrance foyer, a refurbished and extended children's library and new feature windows with views over Bonn Square and Castle Street. While this work takes place, the location for the temporary library will be in the nearby Castle Quarter. Current plans are for the existing library to close to the public on February 27, with the new smaller temporary library opening its doors at the end of March. The library will remain there for 18 months until the new Westgate Oxford opens in October 2017.

Cllr Patrick Greene – Didcot East & Hagbourne Division – Oxfordshire County Council

Appendix 4 – Bus Briefing Notes

Bus Subsidy withdrawal

Our PTR, Mary Harrison and Cllr Rickeard attended meetings held in Oxford on 19/20 January with Thames Travel (responsible for 94/95) and OCC (responsible for 131), following which we have a better idea of the financial challenge. Notes from the discussion were circulated on 22 January to all affected villages as well as East Hagbourne Councillors.

Actions for Parish Councils from the discussion were

1. Contact our local county councillor and ask them to do a proper assessment of how social needs will be affected if the bus service is removed. (Done: email of 19 Jan)
2. Find out who in their village travels with the OCC bus transport service to secondary schools (King Alfred's, Wallingford, Didcot schools etc) and pass this information on to Thames Travel, in case it is useful in their further discussions with the Council (Mary is working on it).
3. Explore what financial assistance parishes are willing/empowered to give to needy travellers (to be discussed at the EHPC meeting) .

A meeting was convened in Blewbury on Sunday 31 January where representatives from the parishes, including bus users, shared views and information. As a consequence, a focus group of users, council reps and PTRs has been set up chaired by Maranda St John Nicholle (Blewbury).

Efforts will be prioritised on discussion with Thames Travel to try and retain a 94/95 service. As soon as possible, the focus group will approach Thames Travel with a positive program to enable them to identify a solution to the complete withdrawal of services.

Parish Council support for Transport

The following clarifies the powers Parish Councils have to support transport services and is based on the latest advice from the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils:

The Local Government and Rating Act 1997 gives local councils the power to carry out the following activities:

- **Car-sharing schemes** – a local council may establish a car-sharing scheme for the benefit of people in the council's area, or assist others in so doing (*section 26*)
- **Grants for bus services** – a local council may make grants to any body which operates bus services for the elderly or disabled, or a community bus service for the benefit of people in the council's area (*section 27*)
- **Taxi fare concessions** – a local council may enter into arrangements with a licensed taxi operator whereby the council reimburse the operator the cost of running a fare concession scheme for residents in the council's area who are eligible to receive travel concessions (*section 28*)
- **Information about transport** – a local council may investigate the provision and use of public passenger transport in its area and may also publicise information about public passenger services in its area (*section 29*).

Parish and town councils can only finance activities for which they have a specific statutory spending power which are those outlined above. The powers above will not enable a contribution, or subsidy, to be paid to a commercial bus operator.

(So, Section 27 may allow us to support the 131 service if we choose, but not the 94/95)