

## Weston on the Green Annual Parish Meeting - 27<sup>th</sup> April 2022

### Minutes

#### Attendees:

Members of the parish

Parish Councillors: Diane Bohm, Susan Davies, Robin Stafford Allen, Henry Donne, Neil Mullane, John Miller and Colin Rosser.

Councillor David Hughes (Cherwell District Council)

Councillor Nigel Simpson (Oxfordshire County Council)

Diane Bohm (Chairman of Parish Council) welcomed all to the Annual Parish meeting including the new manager of The Manor Hotel (Marnix Teeken). On a sober note she took a moment to remember those who have past away over the last 2 ½ years.

#### 22.1 Resolution To Approve: Minutes of 2019 Annual Parish Meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2019

The minutes of 27<sup>th</sup> March 2019 Annual Parish meeting were moved by Diane Bohm and seconded by Susan Davies. The motion was supported unanimously by attendees at the meeting.

#### 22.2 Update from Chair of Parish Council – Diane Bohm (DB)

DB highlighted that the Council's model of working is through shared leadership. All councillors lead an area of development, financial management and planning. The Council also incorporates talent and specialism outside of the Council to lead some advisory groups. This work is overseen by the Chair and all reports go through the Council. At this moment, we are wanting to expand this way of working in order to have more 'reach' into the village and to take on new projects.

Since 2019 the Parish Council has:

1. Formalised the audit system and hired a new auditor.
2. Revisited the way the budget (found on PC website) is planned and presented through the excellent work of our Finance Advisory Group (led by Ruth Whitfield) and Responsible Financial Officer (Henry Donne).
3. New parish clerk settled in and is now accomplished with the work and has established excellent working relationships with the PC, the district and the county – specifically Highways. The Clerk submits a report to the PC monthly and you might find it helpful reading (on the PC website).
4. The Neighbourhood Plan has gone to referendum and been accepted by Cherwell District Council (2021).
5. Our website has been developed and you will find details of our work there. The project is ongoing and we are happy to take suggestions from you regarding matters you feel should be there.

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6. We belong to a range of pressure and advisory groups which provide advice and sometimes training:
- Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC) which provides training and is available for advice.
  - Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) which is increasingly involved in campaigns to protect green field land from development.
  - Ox-Cam Arc group which is an extension of the No Expressway Group and provides a wide range of information, suggestions and is active in the media.
  - Oxfordshire Neighbourhood Plan Alliance which has become a lobby group at the national level for increased awareness of Neighbourhood Plans in planning and appeal decisions.
  - Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association
  - Oxford Green Belt Association
  - Community First Oxfordshire who undertook our Housing Needs Survey and is now offering free workshops on planning for parish councils.
7. We have found tremendous support from our District and County Councillors over key issues and problems. Councillor David Hughes of Cherwell District Council (CDC) encouraged and supported the village throughout the multiple applications to add a house onto the garden of the Ben Jonson. He has attended most parish council meetings and gives an overview of projects and issues at CDC.  
Councillor Nigel Simpson is our new Oxfordshire County Councillor and in the year he has been in office has become a familiar face at events and PC meetings. We have had an ongoing issue with the County over the Oak Tree pathway, Nigel has taken our concerns up the chain and has achieved much needed communication with senior officers.
8. Planning issues: two major issues have taken an extraordinary amount of time these past two years. We have worked as a team in objecting to the Ben Jonson applications and have truly valued the skill of Councillor Henry Donne in crafting these letters of objection. The other issue of the Oak Tree path has been unnecessarily complicated and faulty decision making from all parties has resulted in something not fitting in with the surrounding community and contrary to the Conservation Area, preservation of an Ancient Protected Tree etc. We believe we are near a solution over who pays for demolition and the new path which already has permission and will be behind the tree and rural in nature.
9. Parish Council purchase of the playing field, playground and spinney from the Duchy of Cornwall in 2021. This was a two-year project and we are indebted to Councillor Robin Stafford-Allen for initiating the negotiation and to the Finance Team and parish clerk for taking the purchase to conclusion.  
Now that we have the site we are able to initiate the work on creating a plan for the overall site and follow up on funding opportunities, currently we have two volunteers to lead the work.
10. We have two new councillors: Councillor Colin Rosser and Councillor John Miller who will pick up responsibilities as the new term of office begins in May 2022.
11. Sadly, we have accepted the retirement of both Councillor Ruth Whitfield and Councillor Henry Donne. Ruth stepped in as a brand-new councillor to be our interim clerk, then took on the role of Governance Lead and produced the documentation needed for the PC to have adequate policies and terms of reference for our advisory groups. This work is exemplary and leaves a strong legacy of conformity to regulations both financial and organisational. Ruth has also led the Finance Group and has work closely with her team in the development of changes to the audit,

the budget report plus a keen eye on expenditure. Henry has taken the role of Responsible Financial Officer and has quietly guided us as we have made purchases and debated financial decisions. He has also been the Lead on Planning and his research and monthly report have helped all of us on the Council feel that we are informed when supporting or objecting to planning applications. All of us appreciate their work and thank them for their support for Weston on the Green.

We are now looking for two new councillors with skills in finance and planning, please get in touch if you are interested.

### **22.3 Neighbourhood Plan update – Susan Davies (SD)**

SD provided background information on the development of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP). The process started in 2015 with the plan being made in May 2021. In its current form it aligns with the Cherwell Local Plan with the policies in the NP sitting beneath the policies in the Local Plan.

However, the Cherwell Local Plan is currently being revised. There was a first consultation in 2021, which the Council responded to and a further one is due shortly. There are expected to be some changes to housing quotas but there are no firm indications yet but the Parish Council will follow all consultations carefully.

The NP therefore requires revising in the next two years to align with the Cherwell Local Plan, the process will start later in 2022 and will include gathering more information from the village. The priority is to maintain the boundaries of our village.

Wider developments also have a much larger impact on the village including Ox Cam Arc (status currently unknown), Great Wolf Resort development, Siemens application off A41, Ardley rail freight interchange. The Council spend a lot of time monitoring and responding to each application.

### **22.4 Works update – Robin Stafford Allen (RSA)**

A number of projects undertaken in the village over the last year were highlighted:

- playing field grass cutting undertaken by volunteers Mark East and Robin - both thanked for efforts
- pond clearances
- contractor footpath works off North Lane
- safety matting placed off the playing field car park and North Lane footpath
- white gate painting
- litter picking on the annual clear up days but also regularly by residents when out walking
- footpath warden, Graham Barnett – thanked for his tireless efforts at keeping the footpaths in good order
- hedge contractor trimmed hedging along Church Lane
- installation of new cycle racks and benches as a result of receiving a grant from the Welcome Back fund via Cherwell District Council

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- Ecologist (Pedro Allen) visited to advise on spinney clearance, spinney tree audit to be undertaken in 2022

- volunteer day clearing spinney

- County Council upgraded verge along Bletchingdon Road/Gallos Brook with gabbling

RSA was noted that the fencing on the playing field requires replacing now that the council own the field and this will be undertaken when access to the field has been discussed further.

All these projects would not be possible without the support of volunteers in the village and the Council are extremely thankful for all the support received.

## **22.5 Oak Tree/North Lane footpath update – Roger Evans (RE)**

RE provided background to the issue over the installation of the new footpath, double heightened curb and barriers at the top of North Lane, around the Oak Tree, which was installed to provide access from the new Southfield housing development.

RE put a plan together for the installation of a new path to the rear of the Oak Tree and a planning application has been submitted and approved by Cherwell District Council, despite Oxfordshire County Council objection.

On RE's advice the Parish Council appointed an arboriculturalist to investigate the installation of the original footpath and the plans for the proposed new path by the Parish Council.

Oxfordshire County Council has since conceded that the path is in breach of the original plans and are now supportive of the proposed new path. They have issued an instruction to the developers (via the administrator) to remove the original path and install the new path. The work will be required to be undertaken alongside arboricultural advice and entail remediation of the roots around the oak tree.

RE ended by thanking Diane Bohm and the Parish Council along with Nathaniel Stock (Cherwell District Council planner), Councillor Simpson and Julian Richardson (OCC engineer) for all their work in pursuing this project to hopefully a successful conclusion.

## **22.6 Technology project update (notes by James Henderson)**

### **i) Fibre project:**

In summary we have not yet received Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) approval to go ahead:

- DCMS have challenged the project paying for the spine (the spine is a large cable of 300+ fibre-optic cables that need to be laid between the main exchange in Summertown and Weston on the Green.)
- The DCMS says this cost should be split across several projects.
- Openreach is disputing this as it is almost entirely needed just for us due to the sprawling nature of our village.

The Oxfordshire top-up budget has crashed with c£300k overspend:

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- This means that pledges are currently only worth the UK-gov contribution of £1.5k/£3.5k for residential/businesses respectfully.
- There is no way we can get enough pledges to pay for the project without the Oxfordshire top up. There is an expectation that this will be fixed in the new financial year.

The DCMS's alternative "Procurement programme" (with several-village-areas sold as grouped lots) has been moved back to July/August 22:

- This programme pauses the community fibre projects like ours for the ~3-6 months required for the lot sales to complete.
- If we end up in a lot (and assuming the lot is successfully sold) any bidder (e.g: Gigaclear) could be successful. It's in our interest to avoid this if possible.

<https://digitalinfrastructureoxfordshire.co.uk>

## ii. "Calling over WIFI"

Calling-over-WIFI is the next best thing to having a mobile signal in your house, where you have a WIFI signal. The list below shows who provides this service today and who are expected to provide it soon (March 2022 data):

Today:	Expected soon:
1pMobile	Ecotalk
BT Mobile	The Phone Co-Op
Utility Warehouse - Telecom Plus	Superdrug Mobile
Sky Mobile	Extreme Connect
FreedomPop	
SMARTY	
Asda Mobile	
VOXI	
Virgin Mobile	

## Which Mobile Providers use which networks?

There are 4 physical networks in the UK (March 2022 data):

O2 is used by:	Vodafone is used by:	EE is used by:	Three is used by:
Anywhere SIm	Anywhere SIm	1pMobile	FreedomPop
Extreme Connect	Asda Mobile	Anywhere SIm	ID Mobile
GigffGaff	Lebara Mobile	BT Mobile	SMARTY
KC Mobile	TalkTalk Mobile	CMLink	Superdrug Mobile
Lycamobile	VOXI	Ecotalk	Anywhere SIm
Sky Mobile	Virgin Mobile	Now PAYG	
Tesco Mobile		Plusnet Mobile	
Truphone		The Phone Co-op	
		ToTheMoon	
		Utility Warehouse-Telecom Plus	
		Vectone Mobile	

List of United Kingdom mobile virtual network operators:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_United\\_Kingdom\\_mobile\\_virtual\\_network\\_operators](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_Kingdom_mobile_virtual_network_operators)

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## 22.7 Traffic update – Neil Mullane (NM)

The new 20mph speed limit was achieved on Church Road/Church Lane in April 2021. Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) are still to carry out creating a soft pinch point at the gate. NM noted that physical pinch points cost c£15-20k and could be a potential future option (depending on access for large farm vehicles) but with the high cost a soft pinch point is to be implemented first.

The focus is now on reducing the speed limit on the B430 to 30mph. Initial drawings have been completed by Oxfordshire County Council and we are waiting for potential traffic calming measure drawings and costings for evaluation. As part of the application process a traffic survey is required to be undertaken. This was completed in April 2022 and the results received.

When compared to the 2019 survey data it showed there has been a 30% reduction in the number of journeys on B430 however, the number of HGV journeys has increased by 25%. The mean speed from the survey was 36mph which increased to 41/42mph for the 85% percentile, this enables the Council to progress talks on reducing the speed limit.

The feedback from OCC regarding a weight limit on B430 was that every village wants a weight limit and if all requests were implemented HGVs would have no where to travel in the county. The B430 is also a relief road for A34/M40 issues. A county wide evaluation of HGV corridors is currently being investigated.

The Parish Council regularly liaises with neighbouring parishes regarding key traffic concerns relating to the large scales developments either planned or proposed in the area e.g. Great Wolf Resorts, Ardley rail freight interchange.

The Parish Council also now push for any s106 money available from potential new developments in the area which will be key to fund potential major projects on the B430.

The Parish Council invested in a speed device along with Islip Parish Council which allows residents to monitor and record speeders to the police. Thames Valley Police have now created a new community speedwatch scheme. Every person now has to go through an online training course but it will allow communities to register speeders more quickly. We are currently waiting for Thames Valley Police to visit the village and assess the potential speedwatch sites.

If anyone is interested in joining the community speedwatch work or the traffic calming action group please contact Neil Mullane on [neilmullane1@btinternet.com](mailto:neilmullane1@btinternet.com)

## 22.8 Vandalism update – Diane Bohm

DB provided an update on the vandalism which has occurred over the last year in the playing field/spinney area. The community police have been spoken to and advice provided. The spinney and area around the stream has been cleared to provide a clearer line of sight. It was requested that residents contact 101 to lodge a report and inform the Parish Council if they ever witness any acts.

### Queries raised by residents:

Following a residents query it was noted that a request to cut back the vegetation on the wall side of Westlands Avenue would go to Punch Taverns.

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The clerk highlighted that she is in regular contact with the Highways Inspector to discuss issues in the village. Issues including potholes can be inputted onto the Fix My Street site ([www.fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk)) and will be picked up by the relevant department and feedback provided. If residents spot an issue please either enter it directly onto the site or inform the clerk who will deal with issues in a batch lot, the potholes on Mill Lane have recently been inputted.

The Bicester foodbank drive, run by the Weston Pantry, Church, Village Hall and Parish Council runs once a month with a collection point at the Weston Pantry (next date 7<sup>th</sup> May 2022).

The issue over traffic coming through the village when there has been an accident on A34 was highlighted but unfortunately it is beyond our control; but the advice would be for cars to be moved on Church Lane when there's an issue. The Traffic Calming Advisory Group will continue to monitor the speed situation on Church Lane.

DB concluded the meeting by saying that much of the Council's work depends on the good will of the village. Some of the projects are ambitious and require expertise that the parish council team may not have i.e. the technology project lead by James Henderson and special advisor Roger Evans.

Village works are heavily dependent on volunteers, the litter pick, maintaining the village gates and flower boxes, the playing field project ALL require volunteer help and DB celebrated the silent volunteers who just do things that they see need doing – from picking up litter from their verges, delivering leaflets and putting up posters, clearing the spinney to regularly mowing the playing field. There has also been the offer of Dalcour Maclaren undertaking a works day again.

Finally, DB thanked the Parish Councillors for the hours of work that they put into supporting the Councils work.

Should you wish to help in any way at all please do contact one of the Councillors or email the Parish Clerk on: [clerk@westononthegreen-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@westononthegreen-pc.gov.uk)