

Minutes of the first meeting of South Hinksey Parish Council's Emergency Committee held via Zoom on Monday 11th May 2020

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.39pm.

1/1. Attendance and apologies

All members of the Council attended: Chris Chater, Michael Cochrane (Chairman), Linda Goodhead, Patricia Jones (Vice-Chair), Christine Madsen.

Also present were: Cllr Bob Johnston (OxonCC), Cllr Emily Smith (VoWHDC) and the Clerk. No members of the public attended any part of the meeting.

1/2. County Councillor's Report

Bob Johnston said OxonCC had held a remote full Council Meeting on 4th May to deal with a number of matters that could not be delayed, including:

- Appointing an interim Monitoring Officer
- Approving a Members' Allowances Scheme for 2020-21
- Updating the Statement of Community Involvement in connection with progressing the Waste and Minerals Plan

Bob said there were 76 participants but most of the meeting proceeded well.

1/3. District Councillor's Report

Emily Smith listed forthcoming meetings of VoWHDC committees that would be held remotely. She had attended a meeting last week of the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme sponsorship group.

She said VoWHDC faces a number of financial issues, including the possible cost of support for homeless people. She also said VoWHDC is starting to think about emerging from lockdown. She reported that VoWHDC has almost finished dealing with support for businesses.

The Vice-Chair asked Emily about resurfacing the Devil's Backbone. The Vice-Chair believed VoWHDC had paid for this when it was last done. Emily said she could see no chance of VoWHDC agreeing to do it.

The Vice-Chair asked whether the Devil's Backbone could be regarded as a cycling route but Emily and Bob both said the rules for the Government's new cycling initiative had not yet been published.

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1/4. Planning

a) Green Belt policy as it applies to South Hinksey

The Clerk asked Bob and Emily whether the Green Belt Policy in the current VoWHDC Local Plan which allows “limited infilling” in this parish was intended also to give a green light to subdivision of plots.

They replied that this had not been its intention. Issues to be considered in such cases were whether such development was overdevelopment, whether it was out of character, etc.

In answer to general concerns about developments in the Hinksey Hill ward raised by Chris Chater, Emily suggested a Neighbourhood Plan would be a way in which parishioners could influence the future of the area.

Bob was not present for the discussion of individual planning applications.

b) St Michael’s, Spring Copse, P20/V0973/FUL

Councillors felt the proposed new structure resembled something permanent rather than temporary and business rather than residential:

If temporary, the Chairman suggested its removal at the end of the construction of the proposed new dwelling could be a condition of its approval

If permanent, the Vice-Chair suggested a condition might be that it must be ancillary to the dwelling and not allowed to be let separately.

Linda Goodhead offered to draft and circulate something which the Clerk would then submit on the Council’s behalf. Action: Linda, Clerk

1/5. Financial Matters

a) Insurance

The Chairman said that the Council’s insurance policy was due for renewal at the end of the month. The Council had reached the end of a three-year agreement with the current provider which had followed an exercise where four quotations had been obtained.

Due to the Clerk’s recent illness, the Council had not obtained any alternative quotations to enable it to judge whether the current provider’s renewal quotation represented good value for money, as required by Financial Regulation 11.

In view of the urgency of the matter, the committee agreed to waive Financial Regulation 11, renew the Council’s insurance policy with the

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current provider for one year only and undertake a full competitive exercise next year. **[Emergency Decision 15]**

The Clerk said that the current provider had asked councils not to send cheques but to make payments electronically.

The Council agreed to waive Financial Regulation 6.5, which requires that payments normally be signed at a Council Meeting. **[Emergency Decision 16]** Action: Clerk to draft Faster Payments instruction for signature. Chris offered to hand it in at the Abingdon branch of the Council's bank.

b) Clerk salary 2020-21

The committee ratified the action taken in April to continue to pay the Clerk by monthly standing order. The old standing order came to an end in March 2020.

The Clerk had informed the Chairman that local government pay rates for 2020-21 had not yet been agreed: the employers had offered the unions 2% in February but the unions wanted more.

The Chairman and Chris had signed a standing order at the old rate which could be cancelled when the situation is clearer.

The Clerk had offered to revert to quarterly payments of salary but the Chairman reminded the Council that this would result in the Council being assessed for employers' National Insurance contributions because quarterly salary payments would exceed the trigger level.

1/6. Burial Ground

a) Fly tipping

Christine Madsen said that the closure of the Redbridge Recycling Centre had prevented her from carrying out her plan to take there the rubbish left next to the bins.

The committee suggested it might be more appropriate in view of the nature of the rubbish to have it removed professionally.

b) Design for new plots

Christine said she had spent time at the burial ground on Tuesday 5th May when a surveyor from Cemetery Design Solutions was due to carry out a topographical survey but no one had appeared. Action: Clerk to email the company

c) Condition

The Clerk said that due to his health he has not visited the burial ground for a couple of months and asked members if it was in good condition.

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Members said that it was, apart from the fact that the volunteer who looks after the wildflower meadow has been unable to attend to it – quite understandably – due to the need to self-isolate for health reasons.

1/7. Urgent business

a) Foxcombe Road 30mph speed limit

Chris asked Bob's advice about the possibility of extending the new 30mph limit to protect the few houses in the parish left outside it. Bob had four comments:

- OxonCC derived its policy from Government guidance so OxonCC would not introduce a 30mph limit without traffic calming measures where traffic generally exceeded 35mph. Bob said it was important to remember speed limits were a form of self-enforcement because the police would do little to enforce them
- Traffic calming would be extremely expensive because only measures such as speed bumps would have sufficient impact on drivers' behaviour. Bob thought £30,000 might be the approximate cost and he reminded the committee that street lighting would also have to be installed along the whole length of any 30mph limit
- New opportunities are opening up for cycleways because the Government has announced a new initiative. The Council could suggest creating a cycleway along Foxcombe Road; Mark Francis was the lead officer. Emily suggested contacting the Cycle Champions now appointed by all of the six major Oxfordshire councils
- More enforcement could be requested such as deployment of a mobile unit. Bob said that in his experience requests were more sympathetically received if they came from parish councils.

b) Resignation

Christine said pressure of work compelled her with regret to submit her resignation from the Council. She undertook to hand over three issues on which she had been taking a lead: new burial ground fees; an accessible website; a neighbourhood plan.

Members all expressed appreciation of Christine's contribution to the Council and urged her to consider six months leave of absence. She undertook to consider the suggestion.

In view of Christine's possible resignation, the Chairman recommended that the Council purchase its own subscription to Zoom and the committee agreed. **[Emergency Decision 17]**

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1/8. Date and format of next meeting

The Chairman announced that he would call a remote Council Meeting for Monday 8th June and a further remote meeting of the Emergency Committee on Monday 6th July.

With the Vice-Chair's agreement, the time of both meetings was fixed as 7pm.

The meeting closed at 8.44pm

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Date: _____