

## **Shilton Parish Council**

**Minutes of Annual Council meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2023 held at The Old School, Church Lane, Shilton, OX18 3AE at 7.30pm**

**Present: Cllr David Cuthbertson (Chair), Cllrs Sarah Royle, Andrew Bray & Steve Harrison. Parish Clerk Julie Alden.**

Members of the public: 23

1. Welcome from the Chairman.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. To receive or accept apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Andrew Pearson, now a Parish Councillor. Veronica Barry also sends her apologies.

3. To approve and sign minutes of Council meeting on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

The minutes were approved and signed.

4. To receive declarations of interest in items on the agenda

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Election of Chairman

David Cuthbertson was re-elected as Chairman, proposed by Cllr SR, and seconded by Cllr SH.

6. Introduction of new councillors

Steve Harrisons is a new Parish Councillor, as is Andrew Pearson, who lives at The Forge, and who will be present at the next meeting.

7. Matters arising from that meeting not on the agenda

None.

8. To receive reports from District and County Councillors

Reports from the District and County Councillors are attached.

Cllr AB asked about how to contact the flytipping officer that District Cllr Rosie Pearson mentioned. There is a report that can be filled out on the website but for a specific site or problem, email RP and she will see if she is able to give out the email. Cllr AB asked about the District Council moving the entrance of the Wood Green site. Rosie Pearson noted that not all departments will be located there, and there are plans to rent out some space to business. Paul Hedges asked if there was a facility for reporting flytipping as it happens. Rosie Pearson will check and send further information. She also noted that the map on the report page needs updating. Since the new officer, fines have gone from 1 in 18 months to 20 already. Cllr DC asked Rosie Pearson what her first year has been like. She said that it had been interesting and that there was a lot to learn. She also said that she hopes that the next year will move faster in terms of improvements, and identified communications as one such area.

## **West Oxfordshire Railway Presentation**

Cllr AB introduced Charlie Maynard of Witney Transport Group and provided some back ground as to the proposals and relevant groups involved. In 2014 a transport group was set up to try to address the problems around the A40 and the amount of housing developments around and to the west of it. Oxford is continually growing and there needs to be a plan to help deal with this. Cllr AB met Charlie Maynard at a West Oxfordshire Environment event – he is the chair of the voluntary, not for profit, cross party Witney-Oxford Transport Group.

The proposed railway route would not be the same line that was closed in 1961 – this route has been built over by houses. The initial study was concerned with how this would be paid for. Unlike the Victorian era, it is unlikely that Parliament would use buildings to fund such projects. The Planning Act of 1961 buried these possibilities. A model to consider is the Northumberland Line, built via voluntary contributions along the line to stations and the houses around them. However, this would not work in Oxfordshire, where there is a lack of spatial awareness around building, and related infrastructure such as school provision, sewage capacity. 22% of housing stock has been added in the last 10 years for 2021-2031. How much more will be added after 2031?

The plan will be to keep as close to the A40 as possible to avoid ripping up the countryside. For various reasons to do with area size, land value capture and available land along potential routes, the station needs to be as far west as possible. The landowners and developers around the area are rapacious – the group are keen to extract as much value from them as possible as par the Northumberland line, keeping options open as to which makes more sense. Cllr DC asked if the line would go into Brize Norton? Charlie Maynard said that the previous and current Flying Group Commanders had been very supportive of a station at Carterton. An identified issue was concerning the volume of freight, whether the MOD would be willing to pay for the line to take freight, taking it off of the A40. The train would be a battery powered, two carriage train with no overhead cables, so not much activity. The exact location of the station and route are still to be decided. Cllr NFJ suggested Curbridge-Brize, Carterton, with less line to build. Catherine Berisford asked if the line would go further, to Swindon or Cheltenham. At the moment this would be a dead end for the branch line, although it is possible one day in the future. Cllr SH asked if it would be a dual or single track, to which Charlie Maynard replied primarily single, although dual will be factored in, especially as the line would need a passing place around Eynsham. It would be a 15-20 metres maximum track, as per the narrow Galashiels line. Cllr DC asked about the cost – the feasibility study by the County Council is not yet complete. The timescale in terms of raising money and construction is not clear. It is dependent on political will, as post 2031 there will be more people and a corresponding material increase in the amount of travel time to/from Oxford.

Alex Postan asked what this would mean for other modes of transport, such as private vehicles, as transport is more difficult in rural communities, as well as the cost. Also private investment in railways in the UK and US has been spent largely on outdated technology. Charlie Maynard noted that there was a speed consideration in travelling in (approximately 22 minutes from Carterton) and that this was not an anti-car development, but about a fast, reliable service with long term benefits. Cllr DC said it would be better to debate again after the survey and reports were back. There was a concern expressed about developers being interested in expanding into valuable countryside. Cllr DC asked if there were any scheduled building plans on the land? Charlie Maynard said that he had spoken to Chris Hargreaves and that there were no plans that were not already at the door.

## **Policy and Finance**

9. Finance update – to review and approve finance update

As attached.

10. Payments and receipts – to review and approve current payments and note receipts

As attached.

11. Review and approval of annual accounts.

Accounts were reviewed and approved. Cllr SR proposed and Cllr SH seconded.

Cllr DC explained the need for approval of the accounts for submission of the AGAR forms. SH proposed and SR seconded.

### **Planning**

12. To comment on any planning applications received before the date of the meeting

There is one current application by Catherine Berisford, about which there is no comment as all the work is internal.

13. Update on previous planning applications

There are none. Cllr DC did note that the system needed reviewing as the notifications that are sent out can be sporadic and people often need to go back and reset things to receive them. We receive them as a Parish Council.

### **Traffic**

14. 20 MPH scheme

We are scheduled to go onto the second scheme, Summer 23-Spring 24, so by next year we will have a 20mph limit through the village.

15. Speed Watch Group

There have been 12 sessions since 27<sup>th</sup> September, and 103 vehicles found speeding, an average of 25%. Once the 20mph limit is in place, there will be speed controls in place in the village near the triangle. Pete Handley has offered to help put the pole up. Alex Postan asked if this would apply to bicycles.

16. Radar device

This is working well. It will potentially be moved, although not on the hill as there is no line of sight.

17. Wildlife Park

Rosie Pearson had a preliminary meeting with Reggie Heyworth. County Councillor Nick Field-Johnson said that the County Council were doing a survey on installing traffic lights so that there would be no backup on the A361 but he will follow up. There was also a turning lane discussed as an alternative to lights. Rosie Pearson said that she spoke to Dave Harrison, who might know more. Nick Field-Johnson noted that there had been a change of personnel since he last enquired. Cllr DC, Rosie Pearson and Nick Leverton met with Reggie Heyworth recently, and Cllr DC said that he wants to solve the problem. Rosie Pearson noted that the West Oxfordshire County Travel Group offered a rare 4 a day service on Sunday and Monday, and that a community bus service would also be a huge help.

18. Closing the ford

The ford survey results were 93% in favour of closing the ford during the winter months of January and February. A few respondents on the other side of the ford expressed concern, as they use it

regularly, but as there is a lot of support, we should speak to Oxfordshire County Council about closing it. John Colson asked what the problem was with the ford, and Cllr DC said that the water that is thrown onto the road by passing vehicles then freezes and is a hazard. John Colson said that it needed to stay open. Cllr DC said that the survey was a democratic vote. Paul Hedges asked who policed the closure? Cllr DC replied that a barrier is put up. Paul Hedges noted that this had previously been barricaded and then thrown into the ford. Cllr DC responded that a drop down, lockable barrier was needed so that people didn't need to keep regularly attending to it.

## **Environment**

### **19. Flood defence**

Cllr AB reported that there are new resources to flood risk at the bottom of the village, in areas affected in 2007 and 2020, as the bunds on Harry Metcalfe's land make a difference, but not enough. After desilting, the speed of the flow increased away from the pond. A flood report suggested a bypass pipe from under the pond to the bridge – this was suggested by the water engineer associated with West Oxfordshire District Council. A proposed hydraulic survey models computer simulation to for the catchment area, but this would be a hugely expensive undertaking for which there is no budget, as it is £35,000 just for the modelling and £40,000 in total. Cllr AB proposes organising a survey using a simplified assessment. There is a flood risk control officer at WODC and he will discuss this with her. The man at OCC asked someone to look at Shilton specifically and was happy with the measures with the bunds. John Colson noted that land south of his stream has a dog leg and that removing that, which should cost about £1,000 would help. Cllr AB felt this to be a bit controversial and noted that it did the opposite in Cumbria. He also observed that downstream of the bridge, the Environment Agency have control. There is a meeting of Bampton and District flood prevention group, with the Environment Agency, Thames Water and County Council in attendance next month, which will be a good opportunity to make contact and engage. Cllr DC said that according to the survey, people thought the flow was going through quite well, although he did notice a problem at Sheep Bridge/Charles McDowell's bridge, where the volume was an issue, as in 2007. Cllr AB replied that everything that can be done is being done. John Heilbron said that the 2007 problem was an accumulation behind the lower houses. Cllr AB replied that the problem is a shallow gradient flow to and from Brize Norton. Paul Hedges said that the problem is downstream through the village. Cllr DC said that the expert reports that the water is flowing high but not affecting the pond, but also that it is an Environment Agency issue and there is nothing we can do regarding Brize Norton. Cllr AB noted that there is some grating blocked near the gully by the fence at Brize Norton – Paul Hedges recommended contacting them. Alex Postan noted that the proposed drain to take water out of the pond by the Packhorse Bridge, and the funding of bunds on Harry Metcalfe's land were funded by grant and Parish Council money. Could we ask the Council for a percentage and then apply for a grant? Cllr DC said that he is not convinced that the bypass is the solution. Housing near Burford Garden Centre is having an impact on the Shill. Alex Postan said that at the time the choice was between bunds and extra draw on the pond, and it was thought that the bunds would be more effective. Cllr DC said there was the option of making Delia's field a floodplain but that wasn't thought to be effective.

### **20. Tree planting**

No report given.

### **21. Grass cutting.**

The grass around the pond has been cut. A resident has suggested that we should leave the grass much longer to help wildlife as suggested in 'no mow May' Liz Lovell asked how wild? Cllr AB noted verges outside the village and Alvescot Rd would be left. John Colson said that he has already cut his verge as part of his property. Rosie Pearson said that Brize Norton Parish Council have looked into

grass cutting and wilding, and there have been some areas left long and some short, for nesting bumblebees. She also suggested doing a digital survey, which Cllr DC said that he would consider. Paul Hedges mentioned that there are patches of mud worn around the pond and could it be reseeded and fenced off for a few weeks? Cllr DC was in favour of this.

## 22. Village maintenance

See above.

### **Other village organisations**

## 23. Old School Management

The Old School has had a lot of work done and looks fantastic. The boiler is about to be put in. Well done!

## 24. Welfare trust

There is £32,000 in there. We made one grant last year and have just made one now.

## 25. Parochial Church Council

The PCC is very well off, having received £60,000 via endowments from wills and trust fund finances.

## 26. Mergers

There is £32,000 in the Welfare Trust – what are we going to do with it? The Trust document says that it is for the benefit of the poor of Shilton. Previously some of it has been used for grants for university students, for transport, computers etc, but there is not much opportunity for it to be used. Cllr DC suggested looking at the possibility of merging with the Old School Committee to move to one central trust. This would be very complicated and the Charity Commission would need to be consulted to make sure that the money in hand is handled correctly.

### **Other matters**

27. Opportunity for the public to speak – to provide members of the public/press with the opportunity to comment on items on the agenda or raise items for future consideration. In accordance with Standing Orders, this will not exceed 15 minutes in total and 5 minutes per person.

Sten raised the issue of the tenant in the house next to the village hall, who is not very communicative or part of the village community. They have been parking a minibus outside the house throughout April and May. There are often events in the village and parking is required – the village is notified of this and asked to move cars. Can something be done? A permit to park, or the police? Cllr DC said that there is nothing that we can do – we would need District Council permission for that. The roads are the responsibility of Oxford County Council so we would need to apply for a parking restriction. Nick Field-Johnson said that this was unlikely, and Cllr DC agreed, especially as it would affect everyone. There were suggestions of applying for 2 hour slots and overnight parking, or just certain spots that are problematic. Cllr DC said that it would affect the whole village and Nick Field-Johnson noted that there would be a problem in enforcing it. Paul Hedges said that there was a major issue around the ford as well and that it would be hard to isolate one area.

Cllr AB noted that there are repairs coming up, with reference to the church budget. Cllr DC said that there is an architect coming to check the maintenance for the quinquennial anniversary, which was a good thing to have done. It is all stone except the bell tower. Cllr DC asked if we needed bells – the general consensus was yes, we do. There are grants available but we would need to have five bells to qualify. The cost is £150,000 to install them.

28. AOB  
None.

Meeting ended at 9.05pm.