

The Parish Council of St. Helen Without

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 10th April 2017 at 7.30pm Dry Sandford Primary School

Present: Cllrs. M. Russell (in the Chair), G. Fitzgerald, M. Gilbert, C. Priestley, C. Parkin, V. Talbot, Cllrs. M. Page, K. Houlden

In attendance: Anna Clarke (Clerk)

1. Apologies for absence

Mr Derek Kelso

2. Declarations of Personal or Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Cllr Parkin - the Manor planning application

Cllr Talbot - the renewal of windows at 62b Barrow Road and the Prince of Wales Pub

Cllrs Gilbert – Local Plan Part 2 – Vortal

3. Matters raised by

a) members of the public

Nothing raised

b) Attending Councillors & MoD

No attending Councillors or MoD

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 8th March 2017

The minutes were agreed and signed by the Chair.

5. Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2)

Cllr Russell has circulated the minutes from the meeting held with the Vale on 7th April. It appears Vale has less allocation than any other district in Oxon. Their social housing allocation is currently full. They have changed strategic direction from a number of small sites for development to one big site in order that they can concentrate on infrastructure. For e.g. there is talk of upgrading a stretch of the A34. However, if they are not able to deliver on the Dalton Barracks (DB) site, then they will be revisiting the smaller sites, so the PC cannot be complacent about them being withdrawn from the green belt. The PC needs to ensure that everything done in Shippon is as empathetic to the village as possible, especially to the character of Old Shippon and the PC needs to establish whether the people of Shippon are in favour of the DB development or not.

Cllr Russell asked for clarification as to why the Vale had taken areas at Whitecross and Shippon out of the greenbelt and they responded that it is long term policy for Dalton Barracks. There may be an issue with the Whitecross land as Doris Field is in Trust. The Vale has also changed the brown line to include the Manor Prep School. The number of houses being considered for Dalton Barracks, has now increased from 1200 to 3500. Vale state that this would include 2 primary schools and a secondary.

Cllr Talbot reported that Marcham residents that she had spoken to said that they hoped to push the 500 house allocation for Marcham up to Dalton Barracks. Cllr Talbot also questioned at what point does it become too late for the Vale to deliver on their local plan in terms of the army vacating? The Army needs to give 5 years notice and are struggling to move families at the moment.

A Public meeting will be held on the 23rd April at Shippon Village Hall. The response deadline is 4th May. The PC will get a feeling of what people want in the response, however Public and Cllrs alike can make their own responses.

Cllr Talbot proposed a £250 budget for the open day. Cllr Page seconded the proposal and there was a unanimous vote to agree.

a) Highways matters

VAS has been halted again as County are disputing the cost of the pole. The price was agreed a year ago and it is their processes that have held things up. The Highways Team to follow up. HSC

Speed Camera – Cllr Page contacted Speed Watch and there are a range of speed guns that are Speed Watch accredited. Cllr Page to investigate further. MP

Road Narrowing – Cllr Russell wondered whether road narrowing with a hump should be considered for Barrow Road? Cllrs Parkin and Talbot agreed but Cllr Page questioned whether there would be enough evidence to support the need and would need the Archer system to gain evidence. The PC would need to fund it.

Honeybottom Lane – Cllr Fitzgerald stated that highways had put the tubes in the wrong place at the Harley Davidson end. Highways Sub Committee to call a meeting with Highways to discuss traffic calming measures. HSC

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Ride on Mower – it was agreed that the PC would not take on any grass cutting but would get the Council to enforce their legal responsibilities. However, Cllrs Parkin & Page attended a meeting with Derek Kelso at the MoD to ascertain which verges belonged to the MoD and which to the Parish and the Station Commander, who is keen to engage with the Community stated that they would be prepared to buy a ride on mower. This would be stored and maintained by them and the PC would insure it and pay for volunteer training. Cllr Houlden commented that there are lots of verges that wouldn't be suitable for a ride on mower and would require a strimmer. HSC will pursue the costs of training and insurances and obtain 3 quotes for cutting, now that they have established where the Parish land is. HSC Wootton PC are paying BGG to carry out their first cut at a cost of approx £700. County will then carry a cut out in July.

b) Transport including No 4 Bus

Running well. The campaign to keep it commercial was successful. Currently no further meetings planned.

c) Abingdon Town Council Neighbourhood Plan

ATC are going for a Community Led Plan. The Clerk to find out timescales for a decision on the Community Governance Review. AC

d) Overhanging Vegetation

There is currently an issue in Cothill, opposite the Mill House. The school sign will soon be overgrown. Cllr Page spoke to homeowners on Church Lane, who were going to take action. Barrow Road, the pavements are covered in leaves and require a drain sweep.

e) Enforcement

The windows on 62 Barrow Road are still not completed. The clerk to follow up. AC

f) Neighbourhood Plan (NP)

Cllr Fitzgerald has resigned has resigned his position as co-chair of the Joint Monitoring Committee and provided the meeting with the following statement:

Without Prejudice

Introduction

Thank you for letting me share my concerns freely about due diligence and governance issues around the Joint St Helen Without and Wootton Neighbourhood Plan. As you know, I offered to do the same at last week's Wootton Parish Council meeting but no reply to my invitation was provided and some members of this body actively tried to stop me attending.

As Councillors will be aware, there have been a number of unnecessary communications that have resulted in the resignation of myself as Co-Chair of the Joint Monitoring Committee, i.e. the governance committee; and, the forced resignation of the Joint Liaison Officer (JLO, George Edmonds-Brown), i.e. in his administrative/non-Councillor paid role.

The whole purpose of this committee was to establish good governance; to ensure the process of commissioning outside consultants was a fair and open process; and, to initially select members of the Steering Committee that will effectively run the Joint Neighbourhood Plan for the next 2 years or so.

Following the first meetings of both the Joint Monitoring Committee and the Steering Committee, I became increasingly concerned about a poor culture that was emerging amongst its members and the administrator, i.e. a lack of and poor processes and decision-making.

I tried to raise these issues, in confidence, with the Co-Chair of this committee with the intent of quietly managing and rectifying these as quickly as possible. This confidence was broken and it led to a much broader and rapid escalation of the issues.

This leads onto my two key areas of concerns, amongst others, that I will focus on: due diligence when spending public money; and, poor governance.

Lack of Due Diligence

When the JMC/governance committee first discussed the use of external contractors due diligence was raised. At this point, I believed and expected that the 'light bulb' should have switched on for everyone in the meeting. This effectively means that three quotes and a fully transparent decision-making process should have been initiated for works going out to external contractors. End of story, it should not have needed explaining.

Unfortunately, some on the JMC/governance committee seemed not to grasp the importance of this concept... and it still remains so, which I cannot explain. It should be of primary concern to all Councillors that we look after the best interests of public funds.

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The JLO appears to have assumed, without there being a process of due diligence or a vote to confirm his thoughts, that he could write to a particular external contractor and say that, in principle, they were commissioned. This action could have potentially lead to a contractual commitment for both Parish Councils and created a liability to this external contractor.

Only one other contractor was ever contacted by the JLO and Councillors never had the opportunity to rigorously examine any costs provided by either party. Indeed, this second quote was only ever an outline price and it was provided after my complaint about a lack of due diligence. So, Councillors on the JMC/governance committee were never provided with 3 quotes, there was no fair selection process and it therefore will not hold up to public scrutiny.

Poor Governance

The selection of the Steering Committee was another primary task for the first JMC/governance meeting. Councillors were provided with basic profiles of volunteers offering their support; however, the JLO, aware of a potential commercial conflict of interest for one volunteer, did not share this information with the committee. His view was that, *"In my own mind I had seen the need for a balance of interests on the committee"*. He made his own assumptions about this individual's net worth to the process and thus this was a material omission.

I first became aware of these conflict of interests when this volunteer then made a partial declaration at the first Steering Committee meeting but, to my knowledge, is still to make a full declaration.

After my complaint about this matter, it was referred to Democratic Services at the Vale of the White Horse District Council who stated: "Conflicts of interest in relation to a neighbourhood planning group's membership will be dealt with during the process of establishing the steering group for your neighbourhood plan". This confirms that the selection process that took place was incorrectly carried out. I await a resolution to this issue.

I had similar process concerns about other assumptions and actions taken without the full authority of the JMC/governance committee. These are lesser in importance but further illustrate a pattern of poor governance practices. Hopefully, these have now largely been resolved.

Overall governance of these committees was also generally lacking, i.e. no minutes being taken, no votes to confirm decisions, member substitutions without notice, non-members joining committees without an invite, etc. I am hopefully that these will also be resolved.

Moving Forward

However, looking forward I still have concerns over the JMC/governance committee being able to move forward effectively as some members of this committee remain reluctant in recognising the highlighted governance problems. It was these concerns that made my resignation inevitable.

In addition, it became impossible to work with the Co-Chair of the JMC/governance committee when it became clear that he regards due diligence should only operate at a certain threshold, i.e. at a spend of over £10,000. I would personally regard this as far too high, especially when this would equate to some 60% of this Parish Council's annual budget (precept). He also does not concur with any of my concerns over the emerging poor governance culture that was evident and in plain sight.

I would urge this Parish Council to reassert and lead the corrective action required; and, recommend a revolving Chair of the JMC/governance committee to ensure a balance is achieved in overcoming resistance to good governance and due diligence processes.

Thank you for your patience.

Cllr Geoff Fitzgerald

Cllr Comments

Cllr Page commented that all of the Members of the JMC had opportunity to speak up and that all present had been guilty of leaving everything to the JLO. Cllr Houlden commented that the PC should step back from the process until due diligence is restored. SHW is currently outnumbered as there are 5 Cllrs from Wootton and only 4 from SHW on the committee. Concerns were raised from some Cllrs over whether there is a general difference in culture and therefore it would be very difficult to make it work, however there has been discussion of disbanding the committee and starting again, re-voting everything.

Cllr Page declared an interest in the fact that he is married to the Chair of the Steering Committee but wanted it known that whilst he agrees that there needs to be governance in place, it should also be noted that there are a lot of volunteers doing a great deal of work at the moment and it would be a huge shame to lose momentum. Cllr Page also noted that the Steering Group will be seeking clarification and guidance on what falls under their responsibility and what under the respective PC's? It was agreed that Rachel Raich from the Vale should be brought in to help with the process as Vale are supposed to offer support to set up the NP.

Cllr Russell took a vote, (assuming that the governance issue is resolved), on who would like to continue with a joint NP? There were 5 'yes' votes and 3 Cllrs abstained as they did not feel that they had enough information to make an informed decision. All agreed a 'cooling off' period would be good.

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Cllr Talbot will attend the next JMC meeting to see if she would be able to take on a regular role. VT

g) Vortal

The Chair took vote on whether to Cllrs would like to proceed with a CRTBO. There were 7 votes to go with the wishes of the majority of residents not to proceed with a CRTBO at the current time. Cllr Gilbert abstained. The Clerk to inform Vortal. AC

5. Finance and Administrative Matters

a) Accounts for payment

Payee	Purpose	Total	VAT
Dry Sandford Primary School	Room rental PC & Vortal Meetings	£20	
Parish Clerk	Salary March	£476.56	
Parish Clerk	Expenses March	£44	
Community First Oxfordshire	2017-18 Subscription	£70	
Oxford Greenbelt Network	2017-18 Subscription	£15	
*Dalton Barracks	Youth Club Grant	£750	
Oxfordshire Play Association	Family Fun Day Grant	£150	

The Clerk's pay is higher than usual due to being paid for taking the minutes of the NP Steering Committee.

Cllr Russell has asked Wootton PC if they would like to contribute towards the LPP2 Public meeting due to Whitecross being included.

*Derek Kelso was not in attendance to advise on whom the cheque for the DB youth club should be made out to so this will be carried over to the next meeting.

c) Applications for Grants

None

6. Matters raised by members of the Council

Manor Prep School – The Clerk to write to Shaun Forrestal asking for the name of the Project Manager with the aim of setting up the first Liaison Committee Meeting. AC

Newsletter - The Clerk to gather the contributions together. AC

Prince of Wales Pub - The Clerk submitted the Community Asset nomination form.

Noticeboard Lashford Lane – the Clerk to get a quote for a new noticeboard. AC

Highways Sub Committee would like to arrange a 'Smarten up the Parish Day'. HSC

7. Planning

Barrow Rd - When the plans are amended for Barrow Rd, if the application number remains the same, it will need to be taken up with Emily Hamerton as it will be out of time to be 'called in'.

St Helen's Church Planning Application – currently no decision has been made.

a) Decision Notices

b) Applications dealt with between meetings

Ref:	P16/V3165/FUL
Date	19 th January 2017
Description	Proposed 4 no dwellings and works there to
Address	Land adjoining no 38 Barrow Road, Shippon, OX13 6JF
St Helen Without PC's comments	<p>This site is washed over by the green belt , however there is limited infilling allowed in the village of Shippon. Vale LPP1 Core policy 13.</p> <p>This site is in the oldest part of the village and has listed buildings on the east and south.</p> <p>The level of the site is appropriately 2 metres higher then Barrow Road so any development must take this into consideration and be sympathetic with this part of the village, retaining this section with its historical impact for the village.</p> <p>There are other sites in the village where infilling would not have such a detrimental affect.</p> <p>The present proposal is inappropriate for this site for the following reasons</p> <p>1. The size and height of the houses are inappropriate and would over dominate this area and considerably change the present historical setting of Barrow Road. The house on plot 4 is only 7 metres from the low listed wall and 11 metres from the listed Stable Block Grade II of Church Farm House. The wing at the back of Church Farm House Grade II which is also listed, is</p>

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	<p>probably the oldest building in Shippon and both of these retain their original condition. The site faces south towards the Old Manor another House Grade II listed building. The application does not preserve or enhance the setting of the listed buildings as required under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.</p> <p>2. Plots 1 and 2 on the north of the site, with houses of this scale will result in over dominance to the properties Nos 2 and 3 White House Close. The bungalow No 2 White House Close will suffer overshadowing with loss of light and privacy.</p> <p>3. The proposed entrance/exit on to Barrow Road is considered to be inappropriate for this site. Barrow Road at his point is starting to narrow and curve and with the volume of traffic here a good visibility splay will be essential. The entrance also needs to be acceptable for emergency and service vehicles so would require enlarging and fundamentally impact the prominent stone retaining wall on the south boundary. An alternative access from Elm Tree Walk should be investigated.</p>
Decision	13 th February 2017
Ref:	P16/V3129/FUL
Date	13 th January 2017
Description	Construction of independent single storey toilet block in churchyard
Address	Church of St Helen, Church Lane, Dry Sandford
St Helen Without PC's comments	St Helen Without PC would object to this application as it is not in keeping with an historic building and archway. It is in the wrong location and would severely impact on the historic listed church building and archway. The white finishing, a wood clad breeze block structure and PVC/UPVC fixtures and windows are completely inappropriate for a structure next to the Church and Archway
. Decision	3 rd April 2017
Ref:	P17/V0548/SCO
Date	7 th March 2017
Description	Scoping Opinion request - for residential development of up to 200 dwellings; means of access and associated works with all other matters
Address	Land off Dunmore Road
St Helen Without PC's comments	For information only
Decision	6 th April 2017
Ref:	P17/V0490/FUL
Date	8 th March 2017
Description	Renewal of previous planning permission for the demolition of existing commercial premises, and construction of new building to form four flats
Address	53 Besselsleigh Road, OX13 6DX
St Helen Without PC's comments	No objections
Decision	24 th April 2017
Ref:	P17/V0663/FUL
Date	17 th March 2017
Description	Demolish & replace 2 buildings
Address	Rushwood, Cothill Road, Dry Sandford, OX13 6JW
St Helen Without PC's comments	No objections, but the tree preservation officer needs to visit the site to look at trees possibly in need of protection
Decision	8 th May 2017
Ref:	P17/V0594/HH
Date	10 th March 2017
Description	Single storey rear extension and demolish existing conservatory
Address	35 Rookery Close, Shippon
St Helen Without PC's comments	No objections

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Decision	1 st May 2017
Ref:	P17/V0605/FUL
Date	14 th March 2017
Description	Extension to provide office accommodation and change of use from residential dwelling to be used as the head office for Cothill Educational Trust.
Address	Cothill House School, 7 Cothill Road, OX13 6JL
St Helen Without PC's comments	No objections
Decision	5 th May 2017

Ref:	P16/V0477/PDH
Date	22 nd February 2017
Description	Single storey rear extension depth 4.800m, height 3.710m. Height to eaves 2.495m.
Address	29 Sandleigh Road, Dry Sandford
St Helen Without PC's comments	Permitted development. For info only.
Decision	5 th April 2017

Ref:	P16/V0806/HH
Date	31 st March 2017
Description	Proposed wooden fencing to boundary of property
Address	76 Barrow Road, Shippon, OX13 6JQ
St Helen Without PC's comments	26 th April 2017
Decision	23 rd May 2017

8. Sandleigh Road Recreation Ground

Cllr Priestley carried out an inspection and all was fine.

Goal Posts - Cllrs Gilbert & Houlden to remove the goalpost as it is no longer useable. The Clerk to obtain quotes for 2 goal posts. AC

Felled Trees – Cllr Russell met with the homeowner and it was agreed that the parish council would remove the pile of vegetation and that the homeowner would replace the trees and remove the pile of rubble. The Clerk is in awaiting a 3rd quote for the removal of the vegetation and maintenance on the rest of the trees. It was agreed to go ahead with a survey on what needs to be done and for the vegetation to be removed. The chippings to be spread over the copses.

The Inspection roster for 2017 is below: Any requests for amendments should be sent to the Clerk. **All**

2017			
May	Cllr Caroline Parkin	June	Cllr Mike Page
July	Cllr Martin Gilbert	August	Cllr Vicki Talbot
September	Cllr Ken Houlden	October	Cllr Carole Priestley
November	Cllr Madeleine Russell	December	Cllr Caroline Parkin

Cllr Russell went through the correspondence and it was resolved to note it and his comments.

9. Correspondence

VofWHDC

Over 60's swim for free 1st April – 31st May

Summer Town & Parish Forum 12th July, 6-9p.m. Beacon, Portway, Wantage

Local Plan Part 2 – opportunity for residents to comment www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/LPP2

Matthew Barber Vale News

Views on Didcot Garden Town to help shape final proposals

Call for Landlords to join White Horse Lettings

Street Name & Numbering – Registration of existing farm address known as Manor Farm, Corn Store, Barrow Road, Shippon

South Oxfordshire New Local Plan www.southoxon.gov.uk/newlocalplan

Compost Give Away Event 13th – 14th May **Other**

OALC March Newsletter

OALC – New Governance & Accountability Guide

OCVA Newsletter

The Parish Council of St. Helen Without

OCVA Charity Awards

Came & Co Newsletter

Rural Oxfordshire Network – invitation to launch

Civic Voice – Civic Day June 17th (national celebration of Civic Pride)

Oxford Greenbelt Network request for annual subs

ATC – notification of intention to go ahead with Community Led Plan

OCVA AGM – Monday 24th April 2017, 5.30p.m., The Old Court House, Floyds Row, OX1 1SS

CFO Spring Newsletter <http://bitly/2nvy88s>

CAB Newsletter

Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group – Consultation ends 9th April

a) Cllrs reports and items for future agendas

Nothing raised

b) Date of next meeting

It was confirmed that the Annual Parish Meeting would be held at 7.00 p.m. on Monday 22nd May 2017 at Shippon Church Hall, followed by the AGM at 7.30p.m.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.35 p.m.

Signed.....Date.....

Minutes & Agendas can be found on our website at: <http://www.woottondrysandfordshippon.co.uk/>