

The Parish Council of St. Helen Without

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 11th September 2023 at 7.30 p.m.
At Shippon Church Hall**

Present: Cllrs. M. Page (in the Chair), C. Parkin, M. Littleboy, R. Bahu, D. Churchouse, N. Benchiba-Savenius

In attendance: Lt Col Andy Gartside, Cllr. R. Webber, Anna Clarke (Clerk)

1. Apologies

Cllr R. Clegg, Mr David O'Hara

2. Declarations of Personal or Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None

3. Matters raised by members of the public

Noise from Airfield Motor Cross Events

Cllrs Page, Churchouse & Benchiba-Savenius, attended a frank and positive meeting with the Station Commander, Lt Col Andy Gartside, to discuss the contentious issue of noisy events at the Airfield. Planning will not talk about the open enforcement case and the PC will leave the matter of Planning law to the Planning department. The PC are lobbying the Vale to resolve the situation, but have no jurisdiction over them or the Army.

There are currently 3 possible outcomes:

- The Vale may say that the quota for events has been reached and therefore cease activity.
- The Vale may issue an Enforcement notice and say that the Army needs to stick to the number of events under permitted development rights.
- The Army could apply for a change of use, so that they could extend the number of events taking place. This option would result in a Public consultation.

If events are going to go ahead, then there needs to be more efforts to mitigate the effects on the local community.

Lt Col Andy Gartside, Commanding Officer 4 Regiment

Lt Col Gartside understands the issues that have been faced and appreciates the level of frustration felt by the Local Community. The Army are keen to be good neighbours. Lt Col Gartside apologised for not being able to attend previous meetings, due to months of deployments and noted that this had been the busiest year that he had ever experienced, whilst in the Armed Forces. There has been a lot to deal with at the Barracks, with the departure of 3 Reg and the changes that brings and multiple training exercises. There has been little room for investment into the Infrastructure at the Barracks and this has resulted in multiple ongoing and sometimes serious structural issues. Although the profits from the Commercial Airfield events go into a general defence pot, it is possible to draw down on them in order to try and improve the lived experience of Army personnel and their families, making housing fit for purpose.

There will be changes going forward with the use of the Airfield as a result of the planned development commencing 2030, which would mean the Regiment leaving by 2028/29. As a result of this, there will be no key capital investment in the next 5yrs in this camp. Consequently, the level of activity of events will naturally start to decrease.

Summary of Grievances

- There are 11 days of events planned in the next 3 months.
- Car Chase Heroes (CCH) – the frequency, duration and noise emanating from these events.
- Rift Airsoft – held every other weekend, involving well in excess of 100, sometimes 200 people creating uncomfortable levels of noise from e.g. lobbing grenades and foul language. This particularly affects the residents of Honeybottom Lane.
- This month there has been 4 days of CCH and 2 days of Rift Airsoft. Residents are having to try and plan life around the events, as it is impossible to hold parties, family events etc, which will just be ruined by the unbearable noise levels.
- A resident offered thanks to Lt Col Gartside and his colleagues for their service and stated that there are no issues with Army exercises. It is understood that some of the profits from the Airfield commercial events are used to improve the Army Personnel's lived experience, however, residents already pay heavily through taxes and shouldn't have to change their lives, not being able to have

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family round and such like because of the noise levels. The recent fireworks were extremely distressing for horses.

- Will the concerns relayed here be taken into account when the 2024 programme is set?
- Some residents have been too upset to attend this meeting.
- This year has been significantly worse than any other year for noisy events.
- There have been times when residents have complained and been told by David O'Hara that he is not aware of what is going on. (Lt Col Gartside responded that Mr O'Hara is very aware of the events taking place, however, there have been considerable issues recently with unauthorised people using the Airfield, which is being addressed).
- The noisy events should be rotated around other venues.
- If the Lt Col is under no obligation to take commercial events, and they are having an impact on people's lives and Mental Health, then why are there still 12 events going ahead? The Army are immune to prosecution and can therefore revoke licences for the events with no comeback. Lt Col Gartside reiterated that he will be reviewing the programme of events, however, cannot commit at this meeting to cancellations. There are circumstances, e.g. if it is someone's livelihood and they have invested a lot of money, that will be taken into account. A few upcoming events have already been cancelled.
- The Airfield is close to a Site of Special Scientific Interest. In the Neighbourhood Plan, it was imperative to put a significant buffer between the SSI and any housing. The noise element must surely be having a huge impact on this site. Cattle grazing there need to be moved during noisy events.
- Communication is key. Knowing when events will be coming up would not make things better but will at least allow for planning.
- A resident offered thanks for the new fencing on Barrow Rd erected by the Army. There have been issues of people entering the Airfield from Barrow Rd at night time, however, the gates are now being closed. Major General Richard Clements announced a Climate Strategy with 5 pillars: Compliance, Clean up, Conservation, Pollution prevention & Environmental Technology. With this in mind, does the Army follow up with the Fireworks company on whether they make good on their carbon offsetting promise? The number of cars alone that attend the Fireworks events, mean they cannot be anywhere near meeting pollution level targets. Can all this be taken into consideration with the new programme of events? Lt Col Gartside Chairs a meeting each month looking at CO2 emissions and such like. Because of the paucity of infrastructure it is difficult to meet all sustainability targets.
- If access points to the base are to be restricted in 2024, then it will affect Honeybottom Lane. Cllr Page confirmed that this has been discussed with event organisers and mitigations considered.
- Environmental Health have stated that Fireworks events are out of their jurisdiction and would be a Trading Standards or Police matter. Trading Standards will only deal with things sold at events and the Police are already under pressure. There is no legal limit for the upper decibel limit, however, there is code of conduct. Explosive Elements have stated that the next event will be even bigger and better. David O'Hara has stated that there will only be 2 Fireworks events per year going forward.
- Cllr Littleboy asked if the November Fireworks can be cancelled due to all the complaints? Lt Col reiterated that he will be reviewing the whole programme for the rest of this year and next, however, until that is done, he cannot commit to anything being cancelled. It may be too near the event to cancel this one and people's livelihoods need to be taken into account.

Next Steps

- Lt Col Gartside to sit down with David O'Hara to review the rest of the years' programme and the upcoming draft programme for 2024. They will look at the pattern of events and make decisions on whether licences need to be revoked or if there is room for mitigation, possible cancelling of events if notice periods permit or a warning system, with e.g. 2 strikes and licences are revoked. Lt Col cannot commit to cancelling events at this meeting, without having reviewed the programme and the contracts. It has been discussed that events could be moved to different part of the Airfield, however, this can have a knock on effect on other events and also end up pushing the problem elsewhere. Consequently, it will need to be reviewed holistically. The PC will be involved in the process of planning the 2024 programme.
- The possibility of capping the length of events will be given consideration.
- A programme of events, 3 months at minimum, but ideally for the whole year will be given to the PC to put on the website.

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- Cllrs Page & Churchouse to continue to liaise with Explosive Events to talk through the issues of Fireworks events and look at the possibility of a time cap being introduced to the contract. MP/DC

Becoming a Parish Councillor

Cllr Page thanked all the Members of the Public present for attending the meeting this evening. The Parish Council has spaces for 4 new Councillors and would welcome anyone who like to be part of the Council and help to shape the future of the Parish. One of the key things that the PC has been involved in is producing a Neighbourhood Plan, which means the PC gets 25% CIL from developments. The NP is a legal document and, once approved, needs to be taken into consideration by Developers. If you would be interested in joining us, please contact the Clerk on clerk@sthelenwithout-pc.co.uk

4. Attending Councillors and MOD

The Clerk to contact David O'Hara about the numerous dead trees on Cholswell Road. AC

5. Airfield Noise

Discussed under item 3.

6. Minutes of the meeting held on 17th July 2023

The Minutes were reviewed and adopted.

7. Matters arising from the Minutes

Action Sheet has been circulated and noted.

8. Dalton Barracks

Cllr Page to contact the Vale for an update, through Cllr Clegg. MP/RC

9. Matters raised by members of the Council

Under AOB.

10. Finance and Administrative Matters

a) Accounts for payment

Ft	Purpose	Total	VAT
Parish Clerk	Salary August	£641.70	
Clerk Expenses	Expenses August Printer paper	£52 *£7.99	
MRH Services	Move SID Location/change battery	£32	
BGG	Grass cutting recreation ground July & August	£220	£44
ST Grounds Maintenance	Bin Emptying July & August	*£40	
Rospa	Annual Inspection Report	£132	£22

* added after the agenda was circulated.

b.) Grants

None

11. Correspondence

Oxfordshire County Council

Matthew Barber Police & Crime Bulletin

Councillor Priority Fund

Highway maintenance open day invitation - Saturday 16th September 2023

Depot open day at Drayton on the morning of Saturday 16th September to have a look around at the site equipment and some live demos – including using sand to have a go at lining (road marking), along with chatting to both Milestone and County Council staff.

2023 NHT Public & Public Representatives Satisfaction Survey

Oxfordshire County Council's highway service has participated in an annual National Highways and Transport (NHT) public satisfaction survey for a number of years. This survey forms part of the picture to better understand and respond to the needs of our customers.

<https://www.nhtnetwork.co.uk/isolated/data/scorecard/new/bespoke/349>

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If you are not able to access it and need a paper version, please contact our Customer Service Centre on 01865 792422. The highways service is keen to hear views as soon as possible but people will have the chance to comment until end of February 2024. Your engagement in this is appreciated.

If you require any technical assistance please email support@measure2improve.com. Once completed your response will be recorded to help support the findings of the survey.

OALC

July & August update

Community Transport Grants

Following the communication regarding community transport grants earlier this month we have received a number of queries, mainly regarding suitable uses for the funding and the nature of community transport.

Oxfordshire County Council's website has a community transport section which gives a good overview of the principle behind community transport, in addition to a directory of the county's providers, case studies and a toolkit for establishing a new scheme. The community transport pages can be found here:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/public-transport/accessible-transport/community-transport>

It is anticipated that most grant applications will be from existing community transport schemes looking to expand or otherwise improve their provision (for example via new coverage or additional vehicles/electrification) and parish or town councils looking to establish new schemes. Should communities be seeking external provision we would expect that this would be via a CT scheme rather than a commercial bus operator as we continue to look to support the sector. Finally, applications should be for the funding of transport provision, rather than transport-related infrastructure.

Should you have any further queries, please don't hesitate to get in touch via communitytransport@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

Vale Communications

155k of longer-term funding for vital information and advice services

Organisations based in the Vale of White Horse who provide vital information, advice and outreach services can now apply for up to five years of funding, thanks to a new grant scheme. Vale of White Horse District Council has launched the £154,920 partnership grant to help ensure that information and advice organisations who help people in the areas of debt, employment, finance, housing, energy, family, law and courts, immigration and health can secure funding for their services.

Commitment to climate action

As the energy crisis continues to impact households, local advice services have an increasingly important role to play in supporting residents with low incomes, living in low energy performance homes. They provide a vital service to access funding and practical help to improve energy efficiency through better insulation, ventilation and cheaper, low carbon heating solutions ensure people are comfortable and safe in their own homes.

As part of the application process organisations will be asked about their commitment to the climate emergency and what support they offer residents in this area.

Organisations can apply via the council's website <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/partnership-grant-2024-29-opening-july-2023/>

The funding scheme is now open [from 24 July 2023] and is due to close on 18 September 2023, with successful applicants due to be awarded funding from April 2024.

New grant scheme opportunity for Electric Vehicle chargers

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), in partnership with Oxfordshire local authorities, is looking to use government funding to provide a network of public Electric Vehicle (EV) charging across Oxfordshire.

One of the ways they are looking to do this is through a Community EV Microhubs scheme, that would provide one or two chargers in towns and villages across the county especially in areas that currently have limited EV charging provision. Expressions of interest can be submitted through the OCC's consultation platform Let's Talk Oxfordshire: <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ev-microhubs-eoi>

The closing date for expressions of interest is 15 September 2023.

Have your say on our landscapes and what's changing them

A new study has launched to better understand, protect and enhance the unique landscapes across South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse and you're invited to have your say.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are preparing a new Landscape Character Assessment and are calling for residents, businesses and visitors to share what they love about local landscapes and what they think is changing them. The study is being carried out by environmental consultancy Land Use Consultants (LUC) on behalf of the two councils.

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The Consultation Hub is open for comments until 29 September 2023, which users can leave anonymously. To find out more and have your say, visit <https://south-and-vale-landscape-character-assessment-luc.hub.arcgis.com/>

Homes Infrastructure Funding update

You are probably aware that on 18 July, Oxfordshire County Council's Planning and Regulation committee resolved to refuse permission for a package of transport schemes around Didcot known as HIF1.

The Secretary of State has since called in the planning application and will now be determining it himself, supported by a public enquiry. In practice, this means that the submitted planning application remains 'live' and has not yet been determined, as Oxfordshire County Council did not issue a decision notice based on the planning and regulation committee outcome.

The anticipated timetable of the government's inquiry and the Secretary of State's decision is not yet clear.

We will provide more updates in due course, although we recommend keeping an eye on the [Oxfordshire County Council news pages](#) for their latest position on the subject.

Have your say on our proposed new headquarters

The planning application for South and Vale councils' proposed new headquarters in Didcot has been submitted by South Oxfordshire District Council and [is now available online](#) for people to have their say.

You can view the plans and leave your planning related comments as part of the formal planning application process. **Find out more and have your say before 31 August 2023, on the Didcot Gateway webpage.** <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/about-the-council/our-new-headquarters/>

Steel monument to honour local heroes at Abbey Meadow

A local historian, Mienneke Cox, has been honoured in the grounds of Abbey Meadows thanks to the cycling charity, Sustrans. This is part of a series of portrait benches installed in recognition of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee year. <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/news/2023/july/honouring-abingdon-s-past-present-and-future-on-the-national-cycle-network/>

Other

Smartwheelie – Wheelie bins stickers
Taurus HR Solutions
Solar panels for Village Halls
Rospa Annual Inspection Report
Kompan UK
CFO Newsletter
Vigilis Tree Shelters

12. Cllrs reports and items for future agendas

None

13. AOB

Emails

It was agreed that all emails involving Council business should be sent to all Cllrs. ALL
It was agreed to spend £273 for an annual subscription to allow Cllrs to send, as well as receive, emails from the St Helen Without PC email addresses. RB

14. Date of next meeting

It was confirmed that the next meeting will be held at 7.30p.m. on Monday 30th October 2023 at Shippon Church Hall.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 9.00 p.m.

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

Minutes & Agendas can be found on our website at: <https://sthelenwithout-pc.co.uk>