

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Sonning Parish Council held in the Pavilion, Pound Lane, Sonning on Tuesday 9 May 2017 at 8.00pm.

PRESENT.

Mr A E Farnese (Chairman), Mr T Fisher, Mrs S Jacobs, Mr P Morrison, Mrs M Pownall, Mrs L A Bates (Clerk). 2 members of the Public.

APOLOGIES.

Mr I Runnalls and Mr K Lawrence.

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME.

The Chairman, welcomed those present.

MINUTES OF THE 2016 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING.

Mr Gilmore proposed accepting the Minutes and Mr Fisher seconded. The Minutes of the 2016 Annual Parish Meeting, having been circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT.

The Chairman said that it was difficult to get WBC to address some of the problems in Sonning and they were blaming budget cuts for everything. The four authorities, Wokingham BC, Reading BC, OCC and SODC had agreed to spend £200,000 for a survey to establish if a third bridge was necessary and if so what effect it would have on surrounding areas. Curiously WBC could afford to completely refurbish Wokingham Town Centre but still claimed they needed to make cuts to the budget. The only redress open for SPC was to protest at the monthly meetings held at the Council Offices. Officers were difficult to contact and the most effective way of getting attention was to go to the WBC desk and ask. Mr Doyle said that WBC had received huge amounts of money through CIL following the decision to allow 13,000 houses to be built in the SDL's and a second tranche of 13,000 were likely to be built. With CIL being levied at £75,000 per house this was producing vast amounts of money for WBC. The Chairman said that he would just like to see some of it being spent in Sonning. The drains were of Victorian construction and in a poor state, the traffic was creating pollution and reducing the quality of life for residents. SPC had written to the local MP's but there had been no reaction. WBC were approving large development, including the Ark built by the Church adjoining existing graves. Flooding would become more of a problem in Sonning Eye since SODC had approved the extension of the gravel extractions. Mr Doyle said that the new gravel extractions in Sonning Eye were set to be the largest in the area. Gravel extraction in Stadhampton generated 28 million tonnes and the extraction in Sonning was set to be even bigger. This would result in 668,000 lorry movements from the site over the next 14.5 years and would destroy the road system. Mr Gilmore mentioned the exhibition being held by Tarmac to explain their plans for the next phase of their gravel extraction. Mr Doyle said that he would attend and ask why Tarmac didn't build a road to connect to the M4. Henley appeared to be oblivious to the impact the additional lorries would have on Henley and surrounding roads. The Chairman said that residents were having to live with the parking problems created by expanding businesses, the increase in pupil numbers at both local schools and SPC had their own problem with parking associated with their football and cricket clubs.

Thanks were due to Mr Trimmings who had kept the litter in the village under control for a number of years but who had now resigned and thanks also to Mrs Hulley who had agreed to take over the responsibility. Unfortunately there was little support for SPC in the parish, there were

three vacancies on the Council which the Council had been unable to fill. Thanks were also due to Mr Morrison for taking care of the accounts and to Mr Gilmore who oversaw the website and was hoping to be able to produce hard copies of the CAA if WBC could supply it in a higher resolution on a CD ready for printing. Thanks were also due to all Councillors and the Clerk. The Chairman said that he had been able to achieve shorter Council meetings and Sonning had a lot of positives but it was being spoilt by expanding businesses' and schools and he hoped that things could be improved.

The Chairman then asked Mr Morrison to make his report.

#### FINANCE REPORT (see annex 1)

The Chairman thanked Mr Morrison and asked Mrs Pownall to make her report,

#### RECREATION AND ENVIRONMENT W.G REPORT (see annex 2).

The Chairman thanked Mrs Pownall and asked Mr Fisher to make his report.

#### HIGHWAYS & TECHNICAL SERVICES W.G. REPORT.

### **HIGHWAYS**

Mr Fisher said that he had taken over the Highway's responsibilities from Mr Evans and this was his first report. The volume of traffic continued to be a problem, which were unlikely to be resolved until a third bridge was built. Rob Wilson MP had done a lot to progress the bridge but it was very slow. Three local authorities, Wokingham BC, Reading BC and Oxfordshire had formed a partnership looking into the possibilities for a third bridge, A traffic modelling study was underway and SODC's attitude to the bridge seemed to be changing.

Traffic speed continued to be of concern and the Council had purchased an electronic speed monitoring device (SID) at a cost of £3,000 and there had been some supportive comments. Thanks were due to Mr Liddiard, who had helped to install it. The monitor registered speeds up to 10mph but didn't display, speeds between 10mph and 20mph were displayed and speeds between 20mph and 30mph resulted in the screen flashing. It was battery operated and this had to be changed every three weeks, when the data could be collected. The data included speed, date and time but not number plates (only the police could do this) and the reports could be shown to the police. Unfortunately, it seemed that 20mph limits couldn't be enforced. Thames Valley Police had £9K of speed monitoring equipment which could be available to parishes in the Thames Valley area. A Community Speed Watch could be set up using the police equipment and this could be undertaken in different locations to monitor vehicle speeds. Mr Fisher had put Sonning on the list to hire the equipment. Volunteers were required and they should get in touch with Mr Fisher. There were concerns about the additional gravel extractions recently approved by SODC and the increase in heavy vehicles in the surrounding areas. Speaking from the audience Mr Doyle said that the heavy lorries from the Tarmac depot wouldn't cross Sonning Bridge as they were overweight and easily identifiable. Regarding the SID Mr Fisher said that it could be moved to different locations and suggestions included outside the RBCS, Charvil Lane, Sonning Lane and Thames Street.

Parking outside both schools was a problem and the success of the Coppa bar/restaurant had led to an increase in on street parking in the surrounding roads. The Parish Council had formed a joint working group with the Sonning and Sonning Eye Society to address parking. Everyone

knew what the problem was but not the solution. There had been 68 student cars parked on Sonning Lane during a recent count. This had been discussed with RBCS who had offered to pay for double yellow lines and WBC would look into this once they took over the responsibility of parking enforcement.

There were concerns that WBC would not be funding the crossing patroller for Sonning School from September. Discussions about SPC and the School providing funding were underway.

Potholes in the parish continued to be a problem. WBC were very slow to carry out repairs but had promised to visit Pound Lane. The Chairman said that Pound Lane and the A4 roundabout were particularly bad and had been outstanding for some time.

Mr Fisher said that there had been an accident on Sonning Bridge and the Bridge had been damaged. It was listed grade 11 and, although WBC were aware, it had not been repaired and bricks continued to fall into the river. It was likely that the bridge would be closed to traffic when the repairs were carried out.

## **TECHNICAL SERVICES**

Mr Fisher said that plans to replace some lights with new columns and LED lighting were in hand. LED's used 1/3 of the power required by the existing lighting leading to reduced bills and they required less maintenance. WBC could control the lights remotely. Originally, LED replacements were not available in heritage style but they had become available at a cost of approximately £650 per unit (compared to the normal retail cost of about £2,000). The Council were proposing to replace some heritage lights once the full costs were known. The columns were only available in a straight design and this was not suitable in some locations such as outside 22 Pound Lane where a bracket light was required to avoid the overhanging hedge. It was a two year scheme and the concrete columns would be replaced as a priority as they were the most vulnerable and they liable to crumble with age.

Other improvements included the introduction of an eco-drain in the recreation ground to reduce the water draining off the field into Pound Lane, this looked good but it hadn't been put to the test yet. Two extra dog bins had been installed, one on the towpath and another in Old Bath Road near the noticeboard. Bike racks had also been installed next to the car park and these had been provided by the Society.

Mr Fisher said that he was also responsible for POLICE and made a short report.

## **POLICE**

Sonning was now a 'No Cold Calling Zone' and this seemed to be having the desired effect.

Data from the SPC's Mini SID were being sent to Twyford Police.

The 20mph zone was not normally enforced by TVP

The Chairman thanked Mr Fisher and then gave the Planning Report.

## **PLANNING REPORT**

The Chairman said that pressure to develop in Sonning continued. One application, to replace an existing three bedroomed house with three, would increase the number of bedroom on the plot from three to fifteen. It was a good sized plot but to accommodate the size of the replacement dwellings they were grouped close together with the effect of a terrace. Overall they were too big and would increase the effect on the infrastructure. RBC School kept increasing the facilities and building additional buildings but took no account of the increase this was all having on the

infrastructure. Added to this the planning officers dealing with Sonning changed continuously and they had no in depth knowledge of the area. A number of application were to convert the loft which was effectively converting a two storey house into a three storey house. Sonning Parish Council could only comment on these application but ultimately the decision was Wokingham's. RBCS were applying to change the field opposite the school into a car park to accommodate the sixth form pupil's now driving to school and parking on the road in Sonning Lane. Alternative parking was available at the RC&HC but this was not used. On most days there were up to 60 cars parked in Sonning Lane from the RBCS entrance towards the A4. The Parish Council would remain diligent as always in its endeavours to protect the parish from unsuitable development.

BOROUGH COUNCILLOR REPORT.

In the absence of Cllr Haines there was no report.

The Chairman then opened up the meeting for questions.

OPEN FORUM

There being no other questions the Chairman thanked everyone for coming and asked them to spread the news and that everyone was very welcome to attend the Council meetings and Council meetings.

The meeting closed at 9.25pm.

Signed..... Dated.....

## **ANNEX 1 FINANCE REPORT MAY 2017**

### **Finance Report for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017**

Overall the financial position for the year continues to be in good condition and the outlook for the coming year is positive.

#### **Income and Expenditure**

Income was substantially higher than the prior year as a result of the CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) receipts during the year. These replace the Section 106 contributions. However, CIL income is restricted to spend on items of a capital nature eg. new lights and speed signs. Other income such as government grants and insurance receipts were down by about £1000 on the prior year.

Administration expenditure has reduced substantially from the previous year as there were exceptional items in the year ended March 2016 eg. CAA, defibrillator and safety fencing. Within the Sports figures are included expenditure on the pavilion for such things as drains, lights and doors.

#### **Balance Sheet**

With the small surplus for the year the General Fund has grown only marginally over the prior year to £34,998. SPC continue to hold £94,500 in longer term investments which whilst not earning much interest are very secure. A CIL fund of almost £22,000 is carried forward into 2017/8 for spend on items of a capital nature.

#### **Outlook**

The budget has been set for 2017/18 with the precept being agreed at 2.5% higher than the previous year. With continued good management the council is confident that it will deliver good value for money in the coming year in terms of services to the local community. We face the on-going well known challenges on drainage, parking and street lighting in the village but we strive to meet these issues.

Peter Morrison Treasurer – Sonning Parish Council

May 2017

## **ANNEX 2 RECREATION AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT MAY 2017**

### **Recreation and environment AGM May 2017**

King George's field has seen another fulfilling year as a community facility providing sport for all. As well as the use by the football and cricket club it is good to see Sonning Primary School making use of the field for cross country practice and more recently rounders.

A new bucket swing has been installed – due to a number of tree roots near the pagoda it has been relocated in the children's play area. Plans are in place for a new safety surface in this area also.

The increasingly expanding Sonning Cricket Club have received planning permission to place 2 new practice nets - these will be positioned in front of the skate park, adjacent to the tennis club.

New drainage has been installed beneath the path accessing the children's play area from the car park. This seems to be working although we haven't had a large quantity of rain to test it yet!

This last football season we sought to alleviate the problem of parking along-side the recreation ground in Pound lane on a Saturday morning which was becoming a hazard. We purchased some 'No Parking' cones which have proved to be quite successful in that the majority of parents have stopped parking in this area and as a result it has made the road a lot safer. We would like to thank Charvil FC for taking the time to place the cones out on the pavement each weekend.

We are still looking to rebuild the pavilion. Small steps and patience are involved as it is such a large project! So far we have taken advice from cricket and football reps from Wokingham

District Council. We have met with representatives from the users of the pavilion (Sonning Cricket Club and Charvil FC) to find out what facilities would best meet their needs and we are now in the process of speaking to an architect in order to draw up some new plans. I have with me some existing drawings which were drawn up a number of years ago which will be adapted if anyone would care to take a look and have some input.

Mena Pownall May 2017

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