

## DEDDINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at Hempton Lounge, Windmill Centre, Deddington at 7:30pm on Wednesday 1 May 2024.

**Present:** Nine parish councillors, Parish Clerk and five members of public.

**Minutes May 2023 and Matters arising.** Cllr J Watts, Cllr M Swadling seconded the motion and the Council **RESOLVED** (unanimous by those in attendance) that the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting for May 2023 a true record of the meeting.

#### **Chair's report**

The Chair welcomed everyone and said it had been another eventful year but perhaps the biggest task has been completing the Deddington Neighbourhood Plan. At around 10pm on 3 May the result of the referendum will be known. After the parishioners have had the opportunity to vote yay or nay to the neighbourhood plan tomorrow.

This is the fruit of several years' work by a neighbourhood plan steering group set up by the parish council. Kudos to Cllr Alan Collins, chair of the group who steered the NP through from start to finish. After a false start with the initial plan which was deemed by the government examiner to be offering too few houses, so it started again – this time allocating a site for new development, employing a planning consultant and undertaking yet more consultations with parishioners to guide the group. The plan broadly allocates one site, north of the fire station, for 85–90 homes (as bumped up by the examiner) which comes with generous community benefits: a nursery, a car park which should enable the health centre to expand, an orchard and a biodiversity zone.

The plan's policies focus on the kind of housing people need, combatting climate change and trying to preserve Deddington as a vibrant, lively community for residents and businesses alike. This latter is difficult to legislate for – potentially the community could lose three or even four pubs in the parish in the coming year whatever the plan says.

The neighbourhood plan has cost a total of around £30,000 for consultant fees, printing and Survey Monkey and room hire – most of which was covered by grants from a government-backed agency, Locality, except for £1,000 which was donated by *Deddington News* (many thanks to them) and the odd £100 from the PC.

Money has been a dominant theme of the year elsewhere. After many years of make-do-and-mend, the parish council and the Windmill management team decided we had to install a new roof on the community centre to solve the problem of invasive damp. To cut a long story short we raised £83,000 in grants towards the total anticipated cost of around £90,000. Huge thanks are due to the Valencia Community Fund – which is affiliated to a local waste recycling centre – for £50,000, to Cherwell District Council for £25,000 and to the Garfield Weston Foundation for £8,000, plus contributions from civic-minded parishioners who are topping up the grants by “buying a rivet”. The PC is grateful too to Cllrs Mark Swadling and Mary Robinson who handled the complicated contract for the work. The roof should be completed next month.

The other major projects of the year, mostly at the Windmill centre and park, such as the soon to be installed mini tennis courts, have been financed by S106 money – the contributions, Burrington Estates, the developers of Hempton Gate and Clifton Gate, are obliged to make towards education, the library, local infrastructure and facilities. So the residents of these estates, can congratulate themselves for contributing to the wellbeing of the parish that is their new home.

There are other projects in mind for various parts of the parish for the coming year, so the financial health of the developers is of acute interest to us – hence our alarm when we heard that the local construction arm of Burrington was going out of business. So far, the PC have been promised half of the amount of S106 due from Clifton Gate and it is hoped the rest will be received eventually.

Of course, as a parish council and hopefully as a community we welcome these new assets. There is however a flip side. We're given the capital to finance them, but we then have to pay for their maintenance and repairs from the parish precept – one reason, aside from inflation, that the precept has to rise, although it's still only a tiny proportion of council tax, something over a fiver a month.

The council itself has changed over the year. One much loved and valued councillor, Martin Ince, has passed away; others have left because of ill health or work commitments. We're very fortunate in this parish, which is blessed with a strong community spirit, to have found three new councillors to replace the ones we have lost – Nick Mylne, Graham Fisher and Tim Darwell-Smith.

Another change is the introduction of a 20mph speed limit in the three villages of the parish and 50mph on the roads connecting them. Collectively parishioners voted for this, with Clifton and Hempton residents particularly keen. Still, some are having second thoughts, a few even suggesting the 20mph limit goads people into driving even faster. I think this is alarmism and that traffic is moving perceptibly more slowly, but it's hard to be definitive. The council has renewed its lobbying for police enforcement of speed limits. And Cllr Swan in particular has mounted a campaign against the HGV lorries thundering through Hempton.

Turning from road safety to health matters, the Blandford fly has bitten many in the parish. Just in the last couple of months we have been invited by our county councillor Arash Fatemian and Steeple Aston Parish Council to contribute to a survey of the likely habitats of the larvae which develop into the fly in the River Cherwell.

The PC hesitated because the crucial season in April was nearly over by the time the request was received and more information was required – whether the River Swere is another breeding ground, how much subsequent annual spraying of relevant areas would cost, and whether other affected councils, such as Banbury, CDC and OCC would contribute to what is a widespread problem. We'd like to know as well whether parishioners are so badly affected that they would like the PC to sustain an annual cost.

We all owe many thanks to councillors I haven't so far named who have also done sterling work for the parish – including Cllr Jill Norton for her work on No Mow May and Cllr Maureen Cox for her expertise on health and highways – and to our amazing clerk, Susan Fuller, who keeps us on the right track and manages our finances, to our excellent minutes clerk, Elen Squires, to the stewards, Richard Banister and Gareth Smith, ably abetted by Cllr Terry Tims, who mow and mend, and collect rubbish and other unmentionables and keep the parish looking attractive, and to our county councillor Arash Fatemian and district councillor, Bryn Williams, who regularly fight our corner.

The Windmill management team do a fantastic job enhancing the community centre and encouraging more and more people to use it. Likewise, we're lucky to have DEN, the Deddington Environment Network, with their eco initiatives and their regular organisation of litter picks with the help of stalwart councillors including our liaison man, Cllr Jonathan Watts – and the Holly Tree Club for maintaining a meeting place and organising events for older parishioners – and the *Deddington News*, a first-rate parish magazine, which loyally covers all our meetings. The list could go on, so if I haven't mentioned you, don't think we're not grateful. You make Deddington what it is – a marvellous place to live.

## **Reports from the Chairs of the Parish Council's Working Groups**

### **Planning Working Group: Cllr Stella O'Neill**

Deddington Parish Council received a total of 68 Planning Applications for the 2023/2024 year (down from 80 applications in the previous 12 months) – these were 39 residential/ building related, 12 Commercial related and 17 tree related applications.

The 17 tree related applications referred to a total of 24 trees, 11 of these were to be felled for a variety of reasons, mostly overcrowding, poor/dangerous/diseased condition, overhanging roads, and undermining buildings.

Where the applicant hadn't already offered to do so, we requested that several of the felled trees were to be replaced as appropriate, either on site or by recommending supporting the Woodlands Trust Scheme that gives away trees as a way of replacing what has been lost, but in a more suitable and sustainable environment.

The remaining 13 trees were to pollard/reduce/crown/top trees, to maintain them in a good condition, of these 12 were approved and one application had not been determined at the time of writing this report. There have been no new Tree Preservation Orders in the parish this year.

The 39 residential building related applications were mostly for renovations, modifications, single and two-storey extensions, conservatories, new gates, windows etc. Included were also 3 applications to create 9 new residential dwellings throughout the parish.

One was a resubmission of a previously refused/withdrawn application for a 4 bed on Clifton Road adjacent to the Burrington Development (non-related). This was further refused on the second and again on a third application, but finally allowed on appeal in March 2024.

The second application was to reduce the previously consented 7 elderly/downsize dwellings at the Poplars, Clifton Road, to 5 bungalows, which was approved.

The third new build application at Mount Pleasant in Hempton, which was undetermined when the last annual report was written in 2023, but was subsequent approval was gained to renovate/extend the original house instead of demolishing it, approval for a new dwelling adjacent and barn conversion all on the same site.

One application to demolish an existing house on the Clifton Road, and completely rebuild (not in the conservation area) which is not currently determined at the time the 2023 report was drafted, has subsequently also been approved.

We received 19 applications for building extensions, renovations, conservatories, two for garage conversions to home offices, enabling more flexible home working. The remaining applications dealt with Discharge of Conditions, CLUP (Certificate of Lawfulness), Listed Building consents, variations of plans previously approved, non-arterial amendments and Reserved Matters applications.

One more slightly unusual application was a 30+metre long swimming pool building adjacent to the Holly Tree cottages which would have been detrimental to the amenity of the elderly/disabled residents in the cottages. This application was refused.

12 applications were made for commercial building matters.

In the previous year, there were 3 applications to install a telecoms monopole on the Banbury Road: the first for an 18m pole, the second two in slightly different locations for 15m poles, all applications have so far been refused. These applications came back in 2023/24 in various forms, all refused, and went to appeal, which also failed. No doubt we await this to come back again in some format or other. To be fair, if the applicant listened to the community, and proposed to locate the pole in the position(s) we have indicated we would support it, as it would no doubt be beneficial to the parish. But we don't feel that outside the Swere, on a busy main road into a conservation area, on the doorstep of a housing estate and a school to be a suitable place for this.

Of the 12 commercial related applications 5 were to convert commercial to residential accommodation, creating a further 8 new homes in the parish. Of these conversions, 7 were

successful on first application, and will create two apartments at Ashcroft House in Hudson Street, and 3 apartments at Mikefran House (the Microlite offices) in the Bullring. The remaining proposal to convert a commercial unit on agricultural land to residential was refused, but subsequently reapplied for Class Q exemption, and has now been successful. Two applications to extend commercial buildings, one to create additional agricultural storage in Hempton and the second to extend and improve kitchen and cloakroom facilities at the Holly Tree Cub in the Horsefair, were also successful.

During the last year 4 applications have been at appeal. As mentioned, the land adjacent to the Clifton Gate development went to appeal with two applications simultaneously, one was allowed, the other dismissed. The landowner has subsequently put the land with consent on the market to sell.

The 5G telecoms monopole also previously mentioned was also dismissed and a 9 house development East of Coombe Cottage in Hempton that was outstanding at the end of the last report in April 2023, went to appeal and was also dismissed. This development was passionately fought off by the residents in Hempton.

As a matter of interest, CDC have only opposed our opinion on 3 applications in the last year, all of which we supported and CDC refused. We do have to remember that we offer a 'layman's' view on the applications we receive, we aren't always in full receipt of all the information at the point our opinion is sought, and while some knowledge and experience is used to support our recommendations, we more importantly offer a local opinion sometimes giving information that CDC may not have, which is useful to them.

However, we do not apply the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to any comments we make which CDC are obliged to do, and we're not qualified to do so, this is the planners' job, so occasionally we differ in our opinions for much more technical reasons than we are privy to at the time of giving our recommendations to any particular application.

It is always interesting to see why CDC do, or do not support our view when they make a decision that differs from ours and is always a good exercise to read the Decision Notice and see the reasons why they chose to determine a particular application in a certain way.

9 applications submitted this year have yet to be determined on 1 May 2024, when this report was drafted.

We have dealt with other matters too, correspondence from residents, including a complaint from a resident regarding possible breach of planning consent and other ad hoc applications; the occasional site visit if the application is particularly concerning; as always, a very varied and interesting year!

CDC have the final say on applications and there have been some occasions where they have not agreed with the PC's recommendations, as mentioned above. In general, though, we believe our views are heard by CDC. The PC in most cases approve applications that meet planning criteria and are regarded as sustainable development, always having regard to legitimate concerns and objections of neighbours and other parishioners.

### **Highways and Transport Annual Report: Cllr Maureen Cox**

Cllr Cox thanked the working group for their continuing hard work and picking up the lead when unable. The group said goodbye to former Cllr Janet Higham and greeted new member Cllr Nick Mylne. Janet was thanked for all her hard work over the years.

The group also works closely with the Hempton and Clifton councillors on their village highway issues. As usual this committee has been extremely busy, successful in many areas but still with issues outstanding.

1. *20mph scheme*: Introduced following our 20mph speed limit Parish Questionnaire. Waiting for VAS replacements.

Meeting with TVP community Officers to discuss items 2 and 3 below.

2. *Traffic lights camera*: The PC asked them to look into why our request to get them working has not been addressed since 2022. Speed enforcement – unlikely now that we are 20mph zone as the equipment in the TVP vehicles is not calibrated for recording speeds under 30mph.
3. *Speedwatch*: More volunteers are required but the band of volunteers is growing and when enough numbers are gathered together and a co-ordinator has been named the group can go ahead. Reminder to all that this is an education tool for those who either knowingly or otherwise do not adhere to the speed limit.
4. *Fix-my-Street*: This is a quick way to deal with a variety of highway issues and get them resolved.
5. *EV chargers*: Oxfordshire County Council's LEVI application has finally been approved for funding by the Department for Transport which will include support for the creation of EV Microhubs. [Oxfordshire awarded £3.6 million to triple public electric vehicle charging provision by 2025](#). Formal EV Microhub applications are now scheduled for Autumn 2024 following a summer tendering process for a charge point operator. The scheme will be promoted widely when launched, including a direct notification to all sites who originally expressed interest in the project. Deddington is on the list.
6. *Hempton Pinch point RTA*: Investigated and meeting with OCC took place last summer and a plan has been put in place in case the 20mph scheme does not reduce accidents and incidents.
7. *HGV lorries weight restriction audit*: Unfortunately, no change in present situation. This work found that due to the complexity of weight restrictions, it was not possible to identify restriction proposals from a county-wide level. This was for a number of reasons such as the need for granular local data. The study identified a number of challenges associated with weight restrictions such as enforcement, exemptions due to access requirements and the need to consider the potential impacts of restrictions on surrounding areas. The study also highlighted that weight restrictions are only one potential solution and the need to fully understand problems before working with stakeholders to develop the appropriate solution. The study therefore developed an overarching process and set of criteria for how OCC assesses, prioritises and addresses HGV issues. The B4031 is identified as an appropriate route on our route map for local access traffic. The A4260 and A361 are identified on the map as appropriate routes for links to smaller towns.
8. *Road traffic closures*: The group continue to report on receipt; many thanks to the DN who publish them as requested
9. *Flood risk funding*: Funding for two areas has been applied for. HTWG have submitted two applications: blocked drain in Clifton near Home Farm; and blocked drain on the Oxford Road near the traffic lights.
10. *School parking*: Many complaints around inconsiderate and dangerous illegal parking around the school. This was passed on by to the appropriate body and the yellow lines around this area have been reinstated and regular warden checks have been promised.
11. *OCC site meetings*: The group has carried out site meetings with OCC. One went ahead in June 2023 – the success of that was ownership of Victoria Terrace, Deddington where an enormous pot hole was eventually dealt with.
12. *School awareness sign*: This was requested Nov 2022. CDC. Going ahead but we have yet to see the installation.
13. *Air diffusion tube*: We requested monitoring following concerns particularly at commuter times around pollution from traffic waiting at the traffic lights near the primary school, and the tube has been installed.
14. *Parish planter*: We have been successful in getting funding for one of our planters, many thanks to the resident and businesses who have been tending these. However, we are looking for one more business to fund the last planter.

15. The bollard outside the hairdresser, Finishing Touch, has been knocked over several times by vehicles in this congested spot, we hope that the last cemented attempt stand up to knocks and bumps.

### **Environment & Recreation Working Group: Cllr Mary Robinson**

2023 was another busy year working on projects to make the parish of Deddington an attractive place to live, while being conscious of promoting and supporting our environment and keeping an eye on the budget at the same time.

#### **Parish wide**

Last year we ran a scheme to leave the grass in areas of the parish uncut during May and June to promote biodiversity and encourage wildflowers and pollinators for bees. It brought an avalanche of comments, equally balanced between good and bad. We've taken note of these and simplified the scheme, doing less but better. Maps of the eight areas are available to view on [Deddington Online](#). We successfully finished off the project to provide new sponsored litter bins around the parish and worked with Deddington Environmental Network on the twice-yearly litter pick. Some of the dumped litter is commercial fly-tipping and we are actively working with Cherwell DC on this.

Our tree management programme continues, catching up after years of under-investment. This includes treating trees affected by ash dieback. We also work with the government's Community Payback scheme which provides workers free to the PC for work like clearing brambles, paths, etc. Thanks to the community benefit that comes with new housing developments, this year we will be making substantial improvements to the children's play areas at Welford's Piece, Wimborn Close and the Windmill.

#### **Windmill Centre**

This is the PC's biggest asset and work continues to maintain and improve the building and its facilities. Last year's major projects were: adding two new disabled loos, one internal and one external, the latter much used by visitors to the children's play areas and sports pitches. A new carpet was laid at the all-weather court and new cricket nets installed. And the long-awaited kitchen refurb was done, giving us a gleaming stainless-steel kitchen fit for professionals.

This year's big project is to install an insulated over-roof on the building which will solve the ongoing damp problems and also help with energy bills. This was done with grant aid from the Valencia Communities Fund, the CDC Village Hall Fund and the Garfield Weston Foundation, for which we are truly grateful. And the parish topped it up through our 'Buy a Rivet' scheme. Next up is to lay two mini tennis courts on derelict land next to the tennis courts for the budding stars of the future. The cctv cameras around the Windmill, both inside and out, will have an overhaul to get maximum coverage from them. And, looking further ahead, the showers in the changing rooms will be refurbished and the car park lighting upgraded.

Thanks to grants, donations and community benefit schemes, we are very fortunate in having leisure and play facilities of this standard in a parish our size. They need ongoing funds for their maintenance and ultimate replacement, and we have built this into our financial management.

#### **Dog poo**

Dog poo left on the ground continues to be a concern, particularly on the sports fields where children play matches. It's disgusting, it's unhealthy and it's anti-social. We do provide dog poo bins: if the nearest one is full, please find another or take the bag home. The PC pay CDC around £2,500 a year for this service: dog lovers think it is essential and complain if bins are full; non-dog lovers complain about the cost. Please, everyone, do your bit by calling out the stubborn small minority of residents who think nothing of it – it's particularly upsetting when the only reply is verbal abuse.

The working group passed thanks as always to our overworked Clerk, Susan Fuller, the two parish stewards, Richard and Gareth, who keep the place in good nick, and to Cllr Terry Timms who is our eyes and ears around the parish. Thank you all.

### **Finance & General Purposes Working Group Report: Cllr Clive Snashall**

Though F&GP's main concern is with the financial accounts and budget control, the working group considers every development in the parish and assesses its financial implications. As these are covered in other working groups' reports they will not be covered here. In addition, it deals with staff matters, including appropriate annual reviews and salary levels.

Total funds held by the Council at the end of March are £511,743, much of which is allocated to known projects including the recent roof repairs for the Windmill, and future replacement of equipment in our various play areas.

The Council holds a capital fund of approximately £400,000. This is money which mainly came to the parish many years ago, and is ring-fenced for spending on capital items. It cannot be used for routine expenditure, but the interest on the money invested can be used to provide services in the parish.

Interest on bonds this year at £7,650 was double than the previous year due to improved interest rates. The Council continue to search for good returns within the constraints of the Financial Services Compensation Scheme limit of £85,000 for any one institution.

The annual financial report will be published on the Parish Council website once it has been audited. The Clerk was thanked for all her work on keeping the finances in order, and ensuring that we act within the law applying to local councils at all time.

### **Open discussion where individuals can raise issues of interest or concern**

A resident asked when the speed camera was going to be reinstated. It was explained that during the recent meeting with TVP they said that it has a low accident record and so is low on the list. Concern was raised that the lights were being jumped. It was noted that monies were to be made available for road safety between the two local airfields and the PC was investigating whether improvements could be made at the lights using this funding.

TVP were asked whether speed monitoring would take place. They explained that most of their equipment is calibrated to 30mph. It is hoped that the vehicle activated signs (VASs) will be replaced. The Chair of DEN offered his support to the Council. He made further three points: (1) he would share the date of the Hobart Memorial unveiling with his team; (2) DEN will attend the Farmers' Market to consult and encourage forgoing second cars; (3) his attendance at the CDC sustainability meeting and its contents (biodiversity plan, consultation with Wild Oxfordshire, creation of a wishlist and the TOE grant towards the Welford's Piece Orchard) were cited as a gold standard project. He and his team were thanked for their work in the community.

**The meeting closed at 8:15pm**