

WHITCHURCH ON THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

www.whitchurchonthames.com

Minutes of the meeting of Whitchurch on Thames Parish Council on Monday 2nd November 2009 in the village hall

Present:

Cllr Harry Butterworth (chairman), Cllr Vincent Aldridge (vice chairman), Cllr Matilda Oppenheimer, Cllr Nigel Grove, Cllr Elizabeth Robinson, Cllr Keith Brooks, Cllr Lindsay Austin

In attendance:

Jo Wheeler (parish clerk), County Cllr Dave Sexon, members of the public

Apologies for absence

District Cllr Pearl Slatter

Declarations of interest

None

Public forum

There were no issues about anything other than the bridge toll.

Previous minutes

Minutes of 14th September 2009 were agreed as a correct record.

Toll bridge matters

Several members of the public commented on the toll increase:

1. One requested that the parish council make it an aim that Oxfordshire County Council take over the running of the bridge, especially as the Bridge Company has proven that it cannot manage the bridge financially. He stated that the Bridge Company displayed a lack of concern and awareness of the local community, and the Bridge Company provides no community benefit at all.

2. Another member of the public asked whether the parish council intend to meet with the Bridge Company to discuss concessionary tolls. Cllr Oppenheimer replied to say the parish council attends all meetings with the Bridge Company and the concessionary toll is something the parish council has always campaigned for.

3. Another member of the public asked whether Oxfordshire County Council could become involved with the concessionary rate issue.

4. It was asked whether the Bridge Company would meet with Toll Freeze, and the parish council concluded that it was the responsibility of both parties to make this decision.

County Councillor Dave Sexon responded to resident comments:

a) Oxfordshire County Council is in no position to take over the running of the bridge. It does not have the finances to purchase or maintain the bridge. The County Council has pledged to keep council tax down. This means it would be impossible to purchase the bridge, at least in the next 10 to 15 years. If the County Council purchased the bridge it would probably also have to raise tolls to recover costs.

b) He recommended that the Bridge Company are pressurised about a concessionary toll for local people and other issues.

In summary, the parish council will be seeking to meet with the Whitchurch Bridge Company to discuss the arrangements for closure and the need for concessionary tolls for local residents.

The parish council will report the results of this meeting in the Bulletin.

Thames Valley Police update

PCSO Mark Bell introduced PC Stephen Pink, the new neighbourhood officer.

A number of youths were found trespassing on the grounds of Whitchurch Primary School at the weekend. They were escorted home. The youths reported that there is nowhere to go to play sports in the village and this is why they trespassed on school property. The council agreed that this is another example of the need for a recreation ground in the village.

The protest against the toll increase was a peaceful demonstration and no trouble was reported. The police normally attend demonstrations with an aim to oversee events and ensure that the Highway remains clear, rather than to make arrests.

Planning decisions:

Reference	Location	Description	District Council decision
P09/E0918	Land at Wells House, Eastfield Lane	Erection of detached two storey three bedroom dwelling and garage. (Resubmission of planning permission P09/E0166).	Refused

Planning applications

New Place High Street Whitchurch Hill RG8 7ET

Erection of single storey front and side extension. Installation of roof light to north elevation and replacement of existing front door with window

As this is a relatively new application and the documents were incomplete, the parish council agreed to review neighbours comments when they are published, before a final decision is made. Neighbour comments aside, the parish council discussed the application and had no strong views.

County Councillor report

County Cllr Sexon confirmed that the 7.5 ton limit for the B471 has been approved and that the scheme will be funded by the County Council, including appropriate signage.

Cllr Oppenheimer asked whether the County Council carry out any kind of regular inspections of roads. Cllr Sexon confirmed that they do but an email from the parish council will help to get problems repaired more quickly.

It was suggested that now the Pangbourne 20mph limit is in force and the Bridge Company have issued a 20mph limit across the Bridge; it would be an ideal opportunity to implement a 20mph limit into the village.

Cllr Sexon replied that the 20mph limit on the bridge isn't statutory. There are other measures to reduce traffic speed.

The parish council agreed that it would continue to pursue the 20mph limit with the County Council, and request another traffic survey to test the effectiveness of the removal of the white lines.

Task Group Reports

The reports by the Environmental group and the Traffic and Roads group are reproduced elsewhere in this Bulletin.

Next meeting

The next meeting is on Monday 14th December 2009. This is an extra meeting, the objective of which is to set the parish council budget.

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Our NEW Village Web Site

Our new look web site is up and running! There is a mass of information there and the news section is updated frequently. So even if it is just to check on the wheelie bin colour of the week, go to:

www.whitchurchonthames.com

Report of the 2nd Environmental Group Meeting

The Environmental Group met at Jill and John Braden's house, was attended by Jill together with Susan Lee and John Southey and was chaired by Councillor Keith Brooks. The committee were obviously pleased with the progress of the change in signage in the village around the High Street. Smart new signs have appeared at the end of Hardwick Road and Eastfield Lane as well as the refurbished ones around Manor Road which are now more in keeping with the others. However the committee thought that there was still much to do.

The litter bin situation is an obvious area for improvement and Councillor Brooks reported that he had met with Fred Thompson-Browne from SODC who had promised immediate replacement of the bin at the end of Hardwick Road with a brand new one across the road which will improve this area greatly. We also have plans to restore the seat and plant bulbs for the spring as these are the first things you see as you come down the hill into the village. The bin at the end of Manor Road will also be replaced as it is well past its sell by date. Having two new bins the committee were anxious that all bins were the same and so we will be asking SODC to quote us for upgrading the remaining 4 bins (High St, Muddy Lane, The Cut). The Parish Council will have to pay for supply and installation.

Next lighting was discussed and Councillor Brooks showed a picture of a light which SODC could supply for £1600 including installation and repositioning where necessary. The committee thought that the proposed lights were stylish and more in keeping with the character of the village. The Parish Council has ordered two initially, one to replace the defunct one near the toll booth which was identified in the Village Plan as a poorly lit area and the other for the junction of Manor Road and the High Street to replace the one attached to the BT pole. The seat here the committee thought was not aesthetically pleasing and we will be contacting SODC for their options for replacement.

Jubilee Walk has become overgrown and needs to be sympathetically 'pruned back' which will involve removal of some substantial branches and can only be carried out by skilled personnel with the right equipment. The main problem is its growth into the road making driving hazardous on Hardwick Road past the village sign towards the chalk hills and we will be examining the cost of this and discussing it as something which the Parish Council might fund. In connection with this the path at the Southern edge of Hardwick Road between the Jubilee Walk and chalk hills was identified as a project which needed to be addressed.

Flooding was identified in the Village Plan as an important area of concern. The flooding tends to occur around the Greyhound in the High Street and has been caused in the past by blockages in the culvert which runs underground through various properties to the River, at least two of which now have new building. The debris sump was last cleared about 3 years ago. Councillor Brooks will be organising an inspection of the sump and culvert as soon as possible to make sure that debris is not building up and is setting up a procedure for annual inspection.

Many thanks again to all the committee for their help

Whitchurch-on-Thames Traffic & Roads Group

Note of Meeting on 30th October 2009 at PH's house

Present: Harry Butterworth, Peter Hawley, Richard Wingfield

Apologies: Adrian Dixon

1. Weight limit in High Street. Formal confirmation of the reinstatement of the 7.5 tonne environmental limit is awaited from OCC. CC Dave Sexon is enquiring as to the nature of related signs and cost. When they are needed is to be decided.
2. Traffic speeds – 20mph limit. Two new signs have been erected outside the surgery to announce the end of Pangbourne's 20mph speed limit and the start of a 30mph limit on approach to bridge. Agreed that this will encourage drivers to speed up and also reduce the chance of the weight limit being noticed. In the same week, the Bridge Company's new 20mph limit, starting only 10m further on from the new 30mph signs, was painted on the road. The group recommends that a major effort should now be made to extend the 20mph zone further into Whitchurch, at least as far as Duchess Close and possibly right up to Hartslock Bridleway. HB to raise this at the next PC meeting and discuss with CC Dave Sexon.
3. Parking near Hardwick Road junction. The situation is reported to have improved somewhat since local parkers have been made aware of safety concerns. Windscreen letters are available for use here and in HR narrows.
4. Toll Bridge North End Pedestrian Safety Scheme. PH reported that there had been informal discussion to ensure the Bridge Company is aware of benefits of this scheme in drawing up its plans for improvements with bridge reconstruction. It was noted that the Bridge Company has satisfactorily repainted all its road markings.

5. Condition of pavements. The group will inspect pavements on Saturday 31st October. Responsibility for weed control along pavements, apparently abandoned by OCC, needs to be defined by the PC as soon as possible.
6. Ferryboat narrows. Church hall planning consent is due soon and is expected to carry a condition for the pedestrian refuge on the corner. Pedestrian ramps (like the many in Pangbourne) should be requested here, on each side of the High Street. Also, better defined pavements are needed from here northwards across church entrance and across pub frontage and part of car park.
7. White lines in Eastfield Lane narrows. Repainting of junction markings done but virtual pavement lines not yet repainted. To be raised at next PC meeting.
8. Removal of High Street central white line. HB reported that this seems to be working by causing drivers to be more cautious.
9. Disappearance of AONB sign near bridge. Reason for this is not clear.
10. Station road crossing. Agreed that the pavement realignment is an improvement but bollards should be installed to protect waiting pedestrians from vehicles emerging from the bridge. To be discussed with Pangbourne PC.

Next meeting of group: Monday 29th December.
1.11.09

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Our NEW Village Web Site

Our new look web site is up and running!

You can check details of the re-instated vehicle weight limit at
www.whitchurchonthames.com

WoTHaBS
WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES HABITAT STUDY
GROUP

The **Garden Tools Workshop** held on Sunday 18th October and run by John Southey was very informative and enjoyable. Everyone who attended found that by the end of the session they had improved their knowledge on the subject - they went away full of good intentions to put this knowledge to immediate use on their own tools!

It was very unfortunate that the timing of this event clashed with not only the popular Autumn Walk but other local activities which meant that the number attending was small.

We are therefore planning to hold this workshop again after Christmas and probably in the Village Hall this time. Keep an eye open for posters and details on the Village website for the details of this repeat event - I can guarantee you will find very interesting.

Also look out for our publicity on the **Winter Working parties** which will be starting again soon. Everyone who showed an interest in the idea of the Whitchurch Volunteers will be contacted personally but anyone else who would like to get some fresh air and exercise in our lovely surroundings should contact us asap.

Sally Woolhouse 984 4365

The Whitchurch Society

New Year's Day Walk 2010

- The circular route will be via Cold Harbour, Great Oaks and Hill Bottom
 - About 6 miles, taking around 2 hours
 - There will also be a shorter alternative of about 4 miles

- Meet on pavement opposite the end of Eastfield Lane for departure at **11.00 am**

- Walk led by Eric Hartley

EVENING BOOK GROUP (MEMBERS) WANTED

I have just moved to Whitchurch & am very keen to either join an existing evening book group or to set one up. Please email me (fmthouse@waitrose.com) if you have a vacancy for a new member or would be interested in joining a new group.

Felipa



Here at Whitchurch Pre-School we are enjoying Halloween and Bonfire Night activities and crafts. Our topic for the term is 'Celebrations' and we will also be learning about autumn, Thanksgiving and Christmas. We are also keenly anticipating our annual Nativity Play and our Christmas party, which we celebrate with an entertainer, games, lots of lovely food and of course a visit from Father Christmas!

We have just said a very sad and fond farewell to Helen Lowney, who has been our Supervisor for the last eleven years. Helen will be much missed by children and parents alike. She has done so much for the Pre-School in the time that she has been with us and so many children around the village will have very fond memories of her and the wonderful start she provided to their education. We now welcome Leanne Fox on board as our new Supervisor. Leanne is also highly qualified and experienced and we all wish her well.

If anyone has any children they wish to register for Pre-School, please contact Vanessa Saunders on 984 5692 or Leanne Fox on 984 4516.

Christmas Coffee Morning

Do not miss the
Christmas Coffee Morning
At
Lesley Landen's,
Coombe Lodge, Hartslock Bridleway,

on Saturday 12th December

10.30am - - 12.00 noon

Come and meet old friends and make new ones.

There will be a raffle,
Homemade cakes and gourmet foods for sale.
All cake contributions most welcome.

Proceeds will go to the Church.

Tel 984 2414

WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES NEWSLETTER

Saturday 31st October 09 we received a call from a vigilant resident who spotted a youth on the School roof in Eastfield Lane. We dispatched two patrol cars to attend the address immediately and we are pleased to inform you we caught several offenders. All details were taken and the individuals returned to their home address. No criminal damage seen or reported to us.

The offenders were playing football and had to retrieve the ball from the school roof. However we explained they were on private property and should use the local recreation ground. One offender explained to me there are no suitable facilities in our community of Whitchurch.

On Monday 2nd November 09 we attended the Parish Meeting and brought this matter to there attention.

We would like to thank the person for being vigilant and this shows how we need your help. Please call when you see anyone acting suspiciously and if they are in a vehicle their car index will be a help.

Police Officers and PCSO's on their normal patrols will identify vulnerable cars/vans displaying property in the vehicles and the owners will receive a letter giving crime reduction advice.

Police Surgery will be held outside the Ferry Boat on the first Wednesday of every month 1500hrs till 1600 hrs. I look forward to meeting members if the community and discussing any concerns you may have.

Pcso Mark Bell Woodcote Police Office.
You can contact the Police on 0845 8 505 505
Or

Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111

You can find out more about neighbourhood policing on our website: www.thamesvalley.police.uk

South Chiltern Choral Society

Christmas Cheer

As always, the South Chiltern Choral Society Christmas concerts will offer a wonderful variety of seasonal music, both ancient and modern. The programme will feature a new work. “A Christmas Mass” by the English composer, Ronald Corp,(not only a well-known composer but also Director of the New London Orchestra). This highly original setting of the Mass is based on hundreds of fragments taken from over 70 well-known carols.

In contrast, the choir will also sing the celebrated “**Chichester Psalms**” of **Leonard Bernstein**, with the unusual accompaniment of organ, Celtic harp and percussion and featuring a very promising 10 year old boy soloist.

The Society has, this year, invited the large Kidmore End Primary School choir to join us. They will sing a programme of their own, as well as a new arrangement of the Spanish carol “Esta Noche” by the ever-popular John Rutter.

There will, of course, be the usual audience participation in singing traditional carols.

As the concerts are on the week-end immediately before Christmas, why not get into festive mood with SCCS!

Dates for your diary: Saturday 19th December 2009 7.30pm

Sunday 20th December 2009 2.30pm

Venue: Chiltern Edge School, Reades Lane, Sonning Common

Tickets: £10 Adults including interval refreshments

£5 Under 18s (Children under 5 free)

SCCS Box Office: Linda Rumble 0118 9543193

Further information on the choir website:

southchilternchoralsociety.org.uk

Tai chi for health – so what is it all about ?

Tai chi is one of those things which bubble under the surface – there but not seeking the limelight. Ask people about it and often someone will say they've seen it on TV or tried it on holiday but they are not quite sure what it involves, what it is all about.

Originally Tai chi chuan developed as a Chinese martial art however it is now widely practised as an exercise system promoting health and wellbeing. It is based upon slow fluid continuous movements aimed at improving stamina, co-ordination, balance and leg strength. Tai chi is suitable for virtually everyone including those returning to exercise after a period of time or after injury. Although it can be practised in a gentle way, make no mistake Tai chi can be intense exercise for both the body and the mind – it requires a lot of concentration.

Many health claims are made for Tai chi and there is a growing body of medical research supporting some of these claims. For example reducing resting blood pressure, improved joint flexibility, reduced levels of stress, improved sense of wellbeing and improved cardiovascular function

I have been running a class aimed at beginners on a Monday morning at the Village Hall in Goring Heath. As with any activity the proof of the pudding is in the tasting; so here is a local opportunity to discover what goes on in a Tai chi class and how it could help you. For further information please feel free to contact me on 0118 9722812.

Debbie Page

WOODCOTE LIBRARY

Time to start thinking about cosy evenings in, with a good book, or perhaps catching up with some of the films you have missed over the last year or so. Did you know that our DVD prices have been cut, so that thousands are now as little as £1.25 to hire for a whole week? What we don't have at Woodcote can be requested from Oxfordshire stock at a small fee and can usually be got within a week.

Our first November display will be by Mike Willoughby, drawing on his research into local people killed in the First World War. This time he will concentrate on those from Whitchurch Hill, Goring Heath and Goring, but will of course be able to answer any questions about Woodcote as well. There are many evocative photographs to see, so do make time to see the exhibition. After this we will be inviting local artists to display their work, some of which will be for sale.

Woodcote Library December

Two people from Woodcote have expressed an interest in joining a reading group. Are there any more? Please let us know at the library as we really need eight to ten to get it going. Do come in to see our exhibition by local artists, many of whose works will be for sale. Christmas presents?

The prices of 23,000 DVD titles have been reduced, so that there are many good films to see at only £1.25 for a week's hire. It's a good chance to catch up on those you have missed or would like to see again.

Finally, the library will be open as normal on Christmas Eve and then re-open on Saturday 2nd January 2010.

Village Environmental Weight Limit

The 7.5 ton limit for the B471 has been approved . This means that anyone seeing a vehicle of over 7.5 tonnes which is not delivering or collecting its main cargo within the village can report it to

Oxfordshire County Council, Trading Standards Service, Community Safety.

Tel: 0845 051 0845 Fax: 01865 783106
County Hall, New Road, Oxford, OX1 1ND
<http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/tradingstandards>

Further details are on our web site www.whitchurchonthames.com

DIARY DATES

Contributions welcome for this column if anyone knows of a date that would be of interest to the village.

NOVEMBER

14th & 15th Art & Craft Exhibition

21st Langtree Sinfonia Concert

21st Quiz night at Goring Heath Parish Hall

DECEMBER

12th Christmas Coffee Morning

THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE BULLETIN

will be published in JANUARY 2010.

Please send your contributions **preferably by e-mail to** Sarah.pongo@talktalk.net by 14TH January 2010

Views of individual contributors
are the views of those contributors,
and are not necessarily the views of the Parish Council
or the editor.