

KIDMORE END PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held at the Church Room, Kidmore End on Wednesday 23 October 2019 at 8.00pm and concluded at 9.20pm.

Present: Ms S Biggs (Chairman), Dr C D Aldridge (Vice-Chairman), I G C Pearson, T M Perchard, J A Swift QC, H Thresher.

Apologies for absence were received from A B Gitsham, A P Harland, Ms A S O'Reilly, P H Dragonetti (district councillor).

5.01 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2019 were taken as read, confirmed and signed as a correct record, subject to the substitution of the word "District" for "Distinct" in Minute 4.22.

5.02 REPORT OF DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

In sending his apologies for absence, Mr P H Dragonetti, the district councillor for the Kidmore End & Whitchurch ward, had reported his Council's decision on the Emerging Local Plan at its meeting on 10 October 2019. He pointed out that, as a result, planning applications would be considered against his Council's Local Plan made in 2011.

Mr Dragonetti also reported on motions adopted by his Council and on the councillor grant scheme.

5.03 REPORT OF THE RETURNING OFFICER

(cf 4.04/19) The Chairman reported that Mrs S G Hall had made her declaration of acceptance of office.

5.04 MRS S G HALL

(cf 4.05/19) The Chairman reported that Mrs S G Hall had retired as a member of the Plans Sub-Committee. The Chairman agreed to handle planning applications relating to Chalkhouse Green, for the time being.

5.05 TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT MATTERS

(i) Temporary road closures

With an e-mail, an officer of the County Council gave notice of the temporary closure, under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, of Uxmore Lane, Checkendon from 17 January 2020 for 3 days, for work to clear cable ducts in the road. The diversion route would be via Horsepond Road, Gallowstree Common and the A4074 road.

(ii) Speedwatch

(cf 4.06(iii)/19) A request was made for the Speedwatch equipment to be deployed in Chalkhouse Green Road, Kidmore End.

(iii) Vehicle speed reduction measures

(cf 3.06(i)/19) Members again discussed the use of speed reduction campaign stickers on domestic refuse bins.

5.06 GALLOWSTREE COMMON ALLOTMENTS - WATER SUPPLY

(cf 4.07(i)/19) In a letter, the Head of Customer Service of Castle Water Ltd confirmed that the wholesaler (Thames Water) had informed the Company that the meter on the water supply at the Gallowstree Common allotments had been either damaged or removed around 2 May 2017. Therefore, there was no record of water used from that date until 12 December 2018, by which date a new meter had been fitted. The wholesaler had, as a result, corrected (sic) the undercharging by applying a volume of 1291m³ on the supply, calculated by making use of meter readings taken before 2 May 2017. The Company had “actively engaged with the wholesaler to better understand and dispute the adjustment but we have now exhausted this process”. The Company had already paid the charges on behalf of the Council and was, therefore, passing these on. The letter referred to an invoice, not enclosed, for £579.49 for water for the period 1 June to 12 December 2018. However, a schedule in the letter inferred that the identified sum would be added to previously invoiced sums, making a total of £2,305.34.

Members expressed confusion about the letter from Castle Water Ltd.

RESOLVED: That Castle Water Ltd be requested to clarify the position regarding charges for water at the Gallowstree Common allotments for the period to 12 December 2018.

5.07 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

(cf 4.21/19) The Infrastructure Claims Team of the District Council advised, by letter, that receipts of £20,808.87 were due to be transferred to the [Parish] Council, from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies collected by the District Council in respect of qualifying developments in the Parish. However, in light of the Council’s decision at its last meeting, the funds would not be transferred, but would be held by the District Council on the [Parish] Council’s behalf.

The letter also referred to the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 which required received sums to be spent on qualifying projects or items within 5 years and set out the reporting regime concerning that expenditure.

5.08 THE REFORMATION PUBLIC HOUSE, GALLOWSTREE COMMON

(cf 4.26/19) That Chairman advised that she had in hand the submission of a third nomination, in accordance with Minute 9.21 of the meeting of the Council in January 2019, for the Reformation public house, Horsepond Road, Gallowstree Common to be listed as an asset of community value.

5.09 TOKERS GREEN POND

(cf 4.29/19) As no further quotations for the work had been received, it was

RESOLVED: That consideration of the removal of the sediment from Tokers Green pond be again deferred.

5.10 FINANCE

(i) Balances

The Clerk reported that balances at the bank totalled £39,008.52.

(ii) Accounts for payment

RESOLVED: That the following accounts, listed in the schedule under Financial Regulation 5.2, be approved for payment:

Castle Water Ltd – Water for Gallowstree Common allotments	£5.31
Moore – External audit fee	£360.00
Ian Kendrick Ltd – Fencing at Kidmore End Play Area	£1,092.00
Kidmore End Parish Room – Hire of accommodation for meetings	£252.00
R F Penfold – Salary net of Income Tax	£142.10
HM Revenue & Customs – Income tax deducted	£94.73
R F Penfold – Printing agenda etc	£5.00

(iii) Budget monitoring

The Council noted a report of the Clerk showing expenditure, up to 30 September 2019, against the approved budget for 2019/20. The report showed a predicted underspend at year end of £221, excluding capital payments and if the Council otherwise spent in accordance with the budget.

5.11 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2018/19

(cf 1.09/19) Moore East Midlands gave notice that the firm had completed its review of the Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance Accountability Return, and discharged its responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2019. Except for the matters mentioned in a separate report (as set out in Part A of the Appendix hereto), on the basis of the Partnership's review, in its opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Return was in accordance with proper practices and no other matters had come to its attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met. Moore also referred to another matter, not affecting its opinion, as set out in Part B of the Appendix.

The Responsible Financial Officer commented orally on the points raised by Moore.

RESOLVED: 1 That the report by Moore be noted.

2 That a response to the points made by the external auditor, along the lines of the oral comments of the Responsible Financial Officer, be posted on the website alongside the audited Annual Return.

5.12 CONSULTATION ON PLANNING MATTERS

(i) Decisions

The Council noted that the application for demolition of part of existing dwelling and detached garage and erection of detached 2 storey 4-bedroom dwelling at Oldfield House, Horsepond Road, Gallowstree Common had been permitted conditionally

(ii) Action of Plans Sub-Committee

RESOLVED: That the action of the Plans Sub-Committee in respect of the following applications, as set out in the register of action, be approved:

insertion of a fully opening first floor window in side wall at Merville, Hazelmoor Lane, Gallowstree Common (amended plan);
conversion of existing outbuilding to create a 2-bed annex, formalisation of SUDS roadway and lowering of existing front wall at Anstey, Wood Lane, Gallowstree Common (amended plan);
single and 2 storey side and rear extensions, new porch, changes to external materials, new detached double garage at Oakfield, Russell Road, Tokers Green (amended plan).

(iii) Applications

The Council considered an application referred to it since the last meeting .

RESOLVED: That the following comments be made on the application for 2-storey rear extension, roof conversion raising ridge height, single and 2-storey side extensions, door and window alterations to side elevation at Campestri House, Rokeby Drive, Tokers Green for Mr G Coleman (amended plan): "Objection – these minor amendments do not satisfy the Council's concerns: the previous objection remains".

(Mr H Thresher disclosed a pecuniary interest in respect of the application for development at Campestri House, Rokeby Drive, Tokers Green, under the Code of Conduct, by virtue of his ownership of a nearby property, and withdrew from the meeting.)

(iv) South Oxfordshire Local Plan

(cf 4.14(vii)/19) The Council noted a press release from the District Council, issued on 27 September 2019, indicating the 3 possible options to be considered by that Council's Cabinet in respect of the Local Plan. It had subsequently been reported in the local media that the Cabinet had recommended the withdrawal of the plan from examination, and commence work on a new plan. However, it had been further reported that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government had issued a direction to the Council not to take such a decision until further notice. At its meeting on 10 October 2019 the District Council had acted as directed.

(v) Planning training for parish councillors

Members noted the presentation slides from training for parish councillors on planning, organised by the District Council, held on 17 September 2019.

(vi) Neighbourhood plans

(cf 2.14(v)/19) With an e-mail, the Leader of the District Council forwarded a letter from John Howell MP about neighbourhood plans, should the emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan be withdrawn. Members recalled that the letter had been noted at the meeting in June 2019

5.13 CARBON NEUTRAL

The Council noted a press release from the District Council, advising that its Climate Emergency Advisory Committee had unanimously recommended that that Council should become carbon neutral by 2025 and the whole District by 2030.

5.14 BIAS IN DECISION-MAKING

By e-mail, a Democratic Services Officer of the District Council had asked that each councillor be supplied with a copy of a note on bias and predetermination: the Clerk had arranged this.

The Clerk reported that he and the Chairman were to attend a training session on the parish council code of conduct on 7 November 2019.

5.15 HOUSE NAMING

In an e-mail, the District Council's GIS Team Leader & Street Naming and Numbering Officer advised that the property known as Lower Lodge, Dysons Wood, Tokers Green had been renamed Badgers Bottom.

5.16 OXFORDSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

The Council noted an update for members published by the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils in September 2019.

5.17 HORSEPOND ROAD, GALLOWSTREE COMMON – HIGHWAY FLOODING

Mr R Crane of Horsepond Road, Gallowstree Common, in an e-mail, drew attention the flooding in Horsepond Road, Gallowstree Common, in times of heavy rainfall. After a recent storm, the houses at Allwrights Cottages had been flooded. Mr Crane pointed out that the highway drains in the dip in Horsepond Road were filled with silt. Mr Crane and his neighbours had raised the matter with the County Council, via Fix My Street, on a number of occasions, since 2018, without any action appearing to have been taken. He sought the Council's help.

The Chairman advised that she had raised the matter with the appropriate officer of the County Council.

5.18 HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING

The Housing Needs' Manager of the District Council drew attention, in an e-mail, to the consultation by his Council on its draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025. Comments on the draft strategy were invited by 25 November 2019.

RESOLVED: That the District Council's draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 be referred to the Chairman for consideration and report.

5.19 DISTRICT COUNCIL DECISIONS

The Council noted a press statement from the District Council concerning the following motions it had adopted at its meeting on 10 October 2019:

- requesting the Council to help EU national living in the District;
- asking the Council to agree that any proposals to build a new bridge over the River Thames from Reading into the District should be restricted to take only public transport, cyclists and pedestrians;
- adopting the recommendations of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (see Minute 5.13 above).

5.20 CELEBRATING VE DAY

With e-mail, the County Officer of the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils forwarded a letter from SSAFA (the Armed Forces charity) about the 75th anniversary of VE Day, which would be celebrated over the period 8 to 10 May 2020.

5.21 HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Ms E Draper [address not given], by e-mail, advised that she had photographs of Kidmore End from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as her grandfather, Mr T F Higgens, had been the first headteacher of Kidmore End Primary School. She wondered whether any of photographs would be of local interest. The Vice-Chairman volunteered to pursue the matter with Ms Draper.

5.22 NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN STEERING GROUP

The Chairman reported that the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Steering Group had received 120 feedback responses from 2 public events regarding the emerging NDP, most of them being supportive. The responses were being collated. 3 landowners had submitted feedback.

Mr I G C Pearson referred to the proposed development of part of the Chiltern Edge School site, on land earmarked for development in the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan.

5.23 PLAYING FIELDS COMMITTEE

Although it was noted that the Playing Fields Committee had not met since the last meeting of the Council, the Chairman of the Committee reported:

- that the leak on the water supply pipe for the Pavilion had been discovered, to the rear of houses in Paddick Close;
- on an amicable meeting with the applicants, and the owner of the land, concerning the planning application for change of use of the land to the north of the Recreation Ground;
- on the application for a grant towards remedial works to pitches.

5.24 TRANSPORT SUB-COMMITTEE

Members commented about the highways' defects' "Superuser" arrangements and the cutting back of the hedge at Withy Copse, Horsepond Road, Gallowstree Common

5.25 MEETINGS, CONFERENCES ETC

The Chairman reported that she had attended a meeting about the proposed recreational facilities off Reades Lane, Sonning Common.

EXTERNAL AUDITOR REPORT 2018/19

PART A

We reported for the 2018 audit that the Council had not had an internal audit performed over the 2017/18 accounts and that the notice of public rights period was not in line with the requirements of the Audit and Accounts Regulations 2015.

As a result, the Council should have ticked “No” to Boxes 4 and 6 of the Annual Governance Statement to reflect these matters.

PART B

The Internal Auditor ticked “Yes” to Box D on the Annual Internal Audit Report which relates to the adequacy of the Council’s budgetary processes and monitoring.

It should also be noted that the reserves of the Council have fallen sharply over the past few years. The reason for this seems to be related to a recent increase in other payments. In the current year this has been magnified by a sharp reduction in other receipts.

Therefore, if it has not already done so, we would suggest that the Council urgently reviews the current reserves position against its budgeted position to ensure it is on track. It should also consider other measures such as raising its Precept in 2020 to bring its future closing reserves figure to a more secure level.