

GORING-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Annual Meeting

Bellême Room, Village Hall, Goring on Monday 9 April 2018 at 7.00pm

All residents of the village are invited to attend

AGENDA

1. Chairman's welcome
2. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 April 2017
3. Matters arising from those minutes
4. Annual Report
incorporating
5. District and County Councillor's report and
6. Reports from Local Organisations
7. Public Forum

Kevin Bulmer
Chairman
Date: 27 March 2018

MINUTES OF THE GORING ON THAMES PARISH ANNUAL MEETING
Bellême Room, Goring Village Hall 7.00 pm Monday 10 April 2017

Members of the Parish Council Present:

Chairman	Kevin Bulmer
Members	Catherine Hall
	Bryan Urbick
	Mary Bulmer
	Emrhys Barrell
	Lawrie Reavill

Officers Present:

Clerk	Colin Ratcliff
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14 members of the public and press

17/1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from:
John Wills

17/2 Chairman's welcome

Cllr. Kevin Bulmer, as Chairman on the Parish Council welcomed those present. He explained briefly the differences between a Council Meeting and the Parish Meeting. He informed the meeting that Cllr. Brandon Hancox had resigned from the Parish Council due to pressure of work and therefore a casual vacancy now existed.

17/3 To approve minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2016

Resolved: That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman

17/4 Matters arising from those minutes not elsewhere on the agenda

None

17/5 Annual Report incorporating reports from local organisations

The Chairman stated he would intersperse his report with others from local organisations at appropriate times.

The Chairman's Report is appended to the minutes and additional comments are included below.

Planning

The Chairman gave a report (appended). He said that the Hydro legal claim had been partly funded by donations.

Railway Action Group

The Chairman gave a report (appended).

Neighbourhood Plan (NP)

Report given by Mike Stares (MS) (appended). He said there had been much effort from so many people and thanked them and the Parish Council for being supportive of the NP work. He said it will be a cornerstone against which to fight large scale development being forced on Goring.

Chris Rickards stated the school was bursting and asked what the plans were. MS said that Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) challenge that it is bursting, the NP has had two major meetings with the School Governors, the Diocese, and OCC in the last six weeks. Initially the school were looking at a 1.5 form entry school but are now planning a new school of the same size as it is now, with the potential for future expansion. He noted however that the NP could not assess it without a fully worked proposal which had not yet

Signed:

Dated:

been received. He explained some aspects of the attendance policy and OCC's reasoning that growth is unlikely.

The Chairman commented that the NP can only consider options put forward by landowners and none had so far done that. The issue is complex and there is a lot of work for the school and governors to do to get a proposal submitted.

MS stated the NP is a living document, there is an urgent need to get it done but it can be adjusted later.

MIGGS

Report given by John Boler (appended). He also stated the lengthening of platforms at the station was due to start soon.

Gardiner Pavilion

The Chairman noted the work was due for handover on 24 April.

Buses

John Boler said that Readibus is funded until the end of March 2019 by MIGGS, and hopes the Parish Council will continue to support it.

High Street

The consultation currently underway on High Street improvements is based upon OCC Highways' advice as a starting point. The aim is to improve safety for pedestrians. He hoped some Community Infrastructure funding might be available as it was one of the top items mentioned during the NP consultations.

Weir

The Chairman stated he had recused himself from any discussions about the weir. Cllr. Urbick introduced the appended report and invited questions. Chris Rickards asked about the current status which was explained and noted that he had tried to contact the Sustainability Group without success noting that some had apparently resigned from the group.

County Councillor's Report

Report given by Cllr. Bulmer (appended) Chris Rickards stated there had been no publicity about who was standing in the CC elections. The Chairman said it was a matter for the parties to inform electors. The names were on the SODC website and had been published in The Henley Standard which would probably do a more in depth article. He noted that the Parish Council cannot get involved in advertising for candidates.

District Councillor's Report

Report given by Cllr. Bulmer (appended)

17/6

Public Forum

Chris Rickards said that the grass cutting in the village was very good and he was impressed with the contractor's work. He asked about electric car charging: the Chairman said there were no plans yet for Goring, some for Oxford City and that it was a challenge to get the different organisations to work together. John Boler stated that Great Western Railway had cut back on two planned charging points due to their reduced budget.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 2007 hrs.

GORING-on-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Report 2017-18

General

The Council has nine councillors Emrhys Barrell, David Brooker, Matthew Brown, Mary Bulmer, Kevin Bulmer (Chairman), Catherine Hall, Lawrie Reavill, Bryan Urbick and John Wills (Vice-Chairman).

Had the resignation of Brandon Hancox & the appointment and resignation of Carmela Boff.

We therefore have a vacancy for one Councillor.

This Council will come to the end of its third year of a 4-year term in May.

Planning

See report by Cllr Brooker.

RAG

See report Ron Bridle.

Neighbourhood Plan

The NP was unanimously approved by the Parish Council at a well attended Extraordinary Meeting on the 5th April to move onto its next stage which is the SODC consultation.

Two further stages after this, inspector & the vote, so plenty of opportunity to have your say (although its subject to the inspector who he hears or in what manner, written or verbal). But remember the final decision is not the Parish Council or the NP Committees or a government inspector or SODC but the villagers.

MIGGs Report

See report by John Boler.

Goring in Bloom

See report by Stephanie Bridle.

SODC award winning Design Guide

See report by Cllr Hall,

Precept

Despite undertaking major refurbishment and update works to the Gardner Pavilion we have been able to finance this from reserves and therefore keep the increase in precept down.

2017-18 £95,066
= 1.99% increase.

Or approximately £1.10 per household in Band D.

The past year also saw the phasing out of grants and additional funding from both South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council – for litter/waste, road cleaning, and support of other services in the Parish. Next year's increase will be a bit higher to absorb the loss of funding (an increase of about £0.89/month at Band D).

The Rectory Garden

Some work being discussed with the SODC tree officer, the council hoping that we can build on last years improvement in the gardens use and get a even bigger improvement this year.

Trees

We spent £942 on tree surveys and have some maintenance planned and approved by SODC for The Rectory Garden. Most has been spent trying to assess the health of one potentially diseased Lime tree in Gardiner Recreation Ground. SODC have asked for further aerial survey work to be done before they make a decision on what should be done with it.

Some routine tree maintenance work was carried out during the year.

Gardner Rec

The improvement works were finished and the extend vastly improved facility was formally opened and given back to the users. All the sports clubs have expressed pleasure in the work carried out and the village can be rightly proud to have this first rate sports facility available.

Burial Ground

The burial ground continues to be an important and respected part of the village, looked after by our Clerk Colin Ratcliff, Cllr Mary Bulmer and a small team of volunteers helping to keep it litter free and provide some colour in the way of flowers every year.

Some grave stones have become unsafe and have had to be laid flat, efforts are being made to locate family's to ask there intentions as they are responsible for there maintenance.

Going Forward Buses

This is a relatively new service organised by Mike Ward and staffed by paid & volunteer drivers. It continues to go from strength to strength and complements to all involved. Shows that community projects can succeed and provide vital services when commercial operations fail.

<http://www.goingforwardbuses.com/>

Readibus

This service supported by the parish council and private donations continues to be valued and well used.

School safety lights switched On

Report by Cllr Barrell

Special Projects

The NP has some special projects namely the High Street and School which the PC will be working on to move forward with various organisations, agency's, councils, School, People etc.

After concerns were raised about the school and the emerging Neighbourhood Plan, a working group was set up with school Governors, parents and Parish Councillors. To ensure the concerns were addressed in the NP, constructive meetings and engagement brought all parties together, and the NP has been amended accordingly. In addition, funded by the Diocese and the Parish Council, a feasibility study was been commissioned to look at the existing condition of the school, and to explore options of refurbishment, rebuilding and building a new school on the existing site. The results of this comprehensive study will be shared out in the coming weeks.

Weir

The High Court judge ruled that SODC had failed in their legal duties with regard to this planning application, but used his discretion and did not quash the planning decision. Legal advice suggested that this was not appropriate in the circumstances and that we should request to Appeal the decision. Though we were initially refused, the procedures had recently changed, and there was considerable doubt that the issues raised in our request for Appeal were properly addressed by an Appeals Court judge. The concerns were raised in a 52.30 application, that would in effect 'reopen' the case to be properly considered for an Appeal. Since 2004, when the 52.30 procedures were developed, there are approximately 200 applications a year – and in those 14 years, only 11 cases have been heard. Ours was the 12th such case. The application was heard on 20th March, by three very senior judges. Their decision is awaited. If we are granted permission to re-open the case, we will then need to present our case to the Court of Appeals, requesting that the planning decision be quashed. We would like to reiterate, the actions taken are against South Oxfordshire District Council. Though the Goring & Streatly Sustainability Group are 'interested parties' in the matter, the complaint is against the Planning Authority and not the GSSG.

Kevin Bulmer
Chairman Goring On Thames Parish Council

Report for Annual Parish Council meeting - 2018

Planning Committee

In general terms we have had the usual applications associated with residential property and as previous years the majority of the wrong type. Once again, a high percentage of applications were either for extensions or new build to achieve 4 & 5 bedroom properties. In addition, any new build proposed as two beds have sufficient space to achieve a third bed so the need for one and two bedroom residential units is still not being catered for.

Hopefully if the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is adopted it will provide sufficient weight to require the provision of accommodation limited to one and two bedroom to cater for the need of young people to buy or residents wishing to downsize.

Referring to the NP and the provision of Affordable Homes, it is hoped that Affordable to Rent Homes can be encouraged, further that SODC require the units to be constructed as opposed to taking money in lieu. For the development at the old Pharmacopious site SODC accepted £100k in lieu of providing Affordable Homes, which does not help the need for low cost accommodation. Further that money is allocated to Goring.

The appeal against the planning approval for the Hydro scheme is ongoing and the unsightly gantries installed by Network Rail is also still being challenged.

We have included a new agenda item for planning meetings which is to cover the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which is money required to be paid for certain developments, large new build, which goes to SODC but which pre-NP we get 15% but if NP adopted I believe 25%. We are owed money from SODC and expect a report and the first funds in April.

David Brooker
Chair of Planning Committee

REPORT on SODC Design Guide 2016 prepared for Parish Annual Meeting 9th April 2018

A new award winning SODC Design Guide came into use in 2017. This is the third iteration with the first version introduced around year 2000 and subsequently updated in 2008.

What is the Design Guide?

The Design Guide is a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and as such is a material consideration in planning decisions so it carries weight in the decision making process.

The Guide is intended to provide broad principles to inform new development and is not intended to dictate specific solutions. Adherence to the Design Guide on its own does not mean that a scheme will automatically be approved, because all planning policies have to be considered when assessing an application and in some instances there can be conflicts and a balanced decision has to be reached.

Why has the new Design Guide been adopted?

The new iteration represents a significant departure from the earlier versions given its need to enshrine planning policy changes in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) adopted in 2012, which no longer permits Local Authorities to impose architectural styles or particular tastes. This specifically states that design policies should avoid prescription and detail and must concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials and access (para 59 NPPF). This change reflects the drive to produce more sustainable developments and the need not to stifle innovation in terms of building fabric and the detailing that is necessitated by much greater levels of insulation, as well as layout challenges to adopt the requirements for increased density. The NPPF specifically states that although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations (para 61 NPPF).

This of course also reflects changes in public attitudes towards what is an acceptable style. The possibilities offered by modern and contemporary expressions in building, which for a while were out of favour in the UK, have now become more widely appreciated. The best examples are much applauded, and there are many examples to offer proof that the juxtaposition between genuine expressions of what is new against the backdrop of what is old, is able to bring out the best in both. Conversely attempts to slavishly copy the old may result in sham 'theme park' developments which detract from both. This is not to say that all buildings expressed in a contemporary manner are good and all expressed in a traditional manner are bad, but determining which are good and which are bad is very difficult for planning officers who do not have any design expertise. The NPPF therefore requires a second level of assessment beyond the Design Guide in that planning authorities should also have local design review panels made up of professionals having the relevant qualifications, skills and experience to review projects and that planning authorities should have regard to the design panel's advice. (para 62 NPPF).

So how is the new Design Guide different?

Clearly it is a greater challenge to create a design guide to express the desired principles while avoiding the proscription of previous versions, and in this SODC have led the way. Instead of farming the task out to private consultants, (as had been done previously,) they employed two urban designers who prepared it in-house. It is more concise than the previous version and is written as an assessment tool. It recommends a process to be followed with an interactive assessment as a way of achieving high quality design. Thus it provides a list of criteria against which proposals can be tested at the different stages along the design process.

The most obvious change is that it is now split into two distinct sections.

The first, Technical Document 1 applies to projects of all types and scale.

This is divided between Part 1 which defines the objectives and principles of the Guide, along with the character, heritage and natural environment of the District and Part 2 which provides more specific design criteria covering matters such as parking, distances between dwellings, amenity spaces, context, form / character / scale & massing. Of specific interest for the Parish of Goring-on-Thames is the photograph a new dwelling along Elmhurst Road that has been used as an example of how local materials have been used in a contemporary way!

The smaller second section, Technical Document 2 deals specifically with challenges faced with extensions to individual dwellings.

Where can the Design Guide 2016 be viewed?

This is available online via SODC's website, links below.

Technical Document 1

www.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/dynamic_serve.jsp?ID=628048304&CODE=D04E14110C9F036B465B91D9D1FBCD8F

Technical Document 2 (Householder Applications)

www.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/dynamic_serve.jsp?ID=628048301&CODE=D04E14110C9F036BD7ED08E4305B6AF0

Goring Primary School safety lights switched on

The long awaited flashing safety lights outside Goring Primary School are now up and running following a three-year campaign. The official switch-on took place on Tuesday 27th February outside the school in Wallingford Road.

For some time the school has been concerned about the safety of its children, half of whom walk to school along this narrow stretch of road with its restricted pavement, and had asked Oxfordshire County Council if they could provide flashing warning lights. But the estimated £10,000 cost was more than any budget available to the Council, and beyond the means of the school.

Matters came to a head in 2016, when a child was hit by a car crossing the road on their way to school. While this was not immediately outside the entrance, it highlighted the fact that most drivers do not realise the school is there, tucked in between the houses, and the Governors wrote to Goring Parish Council asking if they could help. Two councilors, Emrhys Barrell and Bryan Urbick took up the case with OCC to see if there was any way the costs could be brought down to a more achievable figure.

By using a different design of lights, powered by mains electricity rather than solar power, and by utilising two existing lamp posts already in place 200 yards either side of the school entrance, the purchase price was reduced considerably, and when the Parish Council agreed to take over the management and operation of the lights, the future running costs were also reduced, bringing the total bill down to £2200. This was now seen as a realistic figure, and the school set about raising the money.

The children and parents organised fundraising days and reached half this amount, helped by a contribution from the Goring Hairy Legs Race. The Goring Gap Community Fund then stepped in with a generous grant of the other half, and the lights were ordered from Simmons Signs.

Over the winter they were installed by the County Council's approved contractor, Robelec, and this term they were switched on for the first time. The lights are microprocessor controlled, and are programmed to flash for an hour in the morning and afternoon, on weekdays only, throughout the term time. This programme can be rewritten every term and every year, and even takes account of the clocks going backwards and forwards. An override will allow them to be switched on for special events. The LED lights use a tiny amount of power, and the units are portable, so if the school should relocate they can be re-sited.

The switch-on took place on a freezing afternoon, attended by a group of children, and representatives from the bodies that contributed to their successful outcome, but already parents and drivers are commenting on how

well they draw attention to the presence of the school, and slow down passing cars.

Emrhys Barrell

PARISH ANNUAL REPORT APRIL, 2018.
GORING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The four documents which make up the Goring on Thames Neighbourhood Plan have been submitted to the GPC for approval.

These are:

The Neighbourhood Plan
The Sustainability Appraisal
The Basic Conditions Statement
The Consultation Statement

All of the above, along with all the comments submitted to the Plan during the recent Regulation 14 consultation and other supporting documents, will be available on an updated Plan website following GPC approval of the Plan for submission to the SODC

The Plan has been updated following the Regulation 14 Consultation. This involved a massive amount of work, including consideration and correlation of all submitted comments. The Plan document and the Sustainability Appraisal have been updated and two new documents, required as part of the Neighbourhood Plan submission have been developed.

The Basic Conditions Statement: This document describes how the Plan meets the legal requirements for a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The Consultation Statement: This document describes the persons and bodies that were consulted, how they were consulted, the main issues and concerns raised and how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed Neighbourhood Plan.

GPC are holding a meeting on 5 April to consider submission of the Plan.

The SODC Consultation is expected to commence later in April and to last for at least 6 weeks.

This will be followed by a formal examination. If the Plan passes this examination there will be a Referendum on the Plan later in the year.

B N Gilson
Current Chairman of the GNP Steering Group
3rd April 2018.

Goring Division County Councillor Kevin Bulmer 2017-2018 Report

I'm not going to repeat what's in my April report and this is a quick highlight of the year at County

Apart from my basic councillors duty's I sit on a number of committees at County I'm Chairman of the County Pension Committee, Vice Chairman of the Brunel Pension Fund oversight Committee, Vice Chairman of The Renumeration Committee (not Cllr Renumeration but Officers), member of the Oxfordshire Health Oversight Committee and I sit as the elected member on the Children's Adoption Panel.

The Brunel Pension Fund is a government initiative for Public bodies to combine the pension funds to achieve savings of scale and cost. We've combined with 8 other similar minded County's and the environment agency to create a fund of approximately £29billion.

HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE UPDATE

As detailed in the July 17 Parish Report, OCC has signed a new Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) contract that secures all seven sites in the medium term, with no change to the sites opening hours or days

CHANGES TO DAYTIME SUPPORT

OCC is introducing a new daytime service. This follows a review of adult daytime support and a public consultation. From 1 October 17 OCC's Health and Wellbeing and Learning Disability Daytime Support Services will be replaced by a new Community Support Service. This will be delivered from eight centres: Abingdon, Banbury, Bicester, Didcot, Oxford, Wallingford, Wantage and Witney

OCC STEPS UP POTHOLE WORK AS WINTER HITS THE ROADS

Repeated cycles of ice, thaws and snow created the worst possible weather conditions for roads over the last few months leading to a rise in reports on Fix My Street from 3,000 pre-Christmas to 7,000 during January. 36,000 potholes were repaired in the year.

COUNCILLOR PRIORITY FUND KEY PART OF BUDGET PROPOSALS

A key proposal for the upcoming Oxfordshire County Council Budget is to have a Councillor Priorities Fund – all County Councillors will have a £15k fund each to support parish council Highways needs and community group projects.

OXFORDSHIRE'S LIBRARIES ARE THRIVING – NOT JUST SURVIVING

Libraries Minister Michael Ellis MP attended the official opening of Oxfordshire County Library in February. The newly refitted facility welcomed more than 100 guests including staff, volunteers and community groups who have helped ensure the county's 43 branches have a bright future.

OCC BUDGET 2018/19

OCC agreed its budget at a Full Council meeting on 13 February following a five-hour meeting of all 63 county councillors. Council Tax will rise by 5.99%, the maximum amount allowed without a referendum. Key points include:

- Finances are sound compared to other councils, with difficult decisions having already been taken
- The Council Tax rise will deliver extra money for adults and children's social care
- Proposal to extend £500,000 contribution for homelessness for an extra year in 2019/20 (subject to consultation)
- 10-year programme to improve transport network and release more money for road maintenance
- £15,000 for each of the 63 county councillors to spend on local priorities in their area

OX-CAM EXPRESSWAY

The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) has published its report to Government on the Oxford-Cambridge arc. It advised on the need for long-term investment funding for new transport infrastructure to harness the region's economic potential, to benefit local people and boost UK plc in a post-Brexit landscape. Its route is currently Didcot, Abingdon and after that still under consideration together with its exact route past Didcot & Abingdon.

CAMPAIGN TO RECRUIT CARE STAFF TO REDUCE DELAYED TRANSFER

Against a background of increasing demand for care services, particularly from older people with complex problems and needing support, a major campaign to recruit more care staff was launched on 20 November.

COUNCIL AND CARILLION

The Council has worked very hard to reduce the effect of the carillion bankruptcy and a lot of work is still ongoing to assess the state and situation of all carillions maintenance & new build contracts across the county with particular emphasis on schools.

I produce a monthly report which is sent to the Parish Councils on things going on at County

CONTACT DETAILS

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Goring & South Stoke Annual District Report Councillor Kevin Bulmer 2017-2018

Quick run through of the years events at District

Apart from my basic councillor duty's I sit on a couple of Committees at District. I Chair the Joint Audit & Governance Committee with a Vale Cllr and also sit on the Licensing Committee.

GOVERNMENT MINISTER SIGNS £215M GROWTH DEAL FOR OXFORDSHIRE

Housing Minister Dominic Raab visited Heyford Park near Bicester last month to sign a deal to deliver a £215m investment in transport infrastructure and affordable housing in Oxfordshire. The Minister met Councillor Yvonne Constance, the county council's Cabinet Member for Environment and Economy. The deal was signed by all six members of the Oxfordshire Growth Board: Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council, Cherwell District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council. March also saw the Oxfordshire Growth Board announce the first year of projects to be funded by an initial release of £30m for infrastructure projects as part of the Deal agreement. Government road money is for major improvements and cannot be used for day-to-day maintenance, but the investment will help to improve the overall standard of the road network.

HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND (HIF)

On 21 March the Government announced 44 bids which have made it through to stage 2 of its Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) to fund major infrastructure projects. Two of the three HIF bids submitted by OCC last autumn on behalf of Oxfordshire made it through and will now progress to a co-development stage:

Didcot Garden Town – £171m is sought for transport improvements including a Didcot Science Bridge and A4130 dual carriageway, a new river crossing at Culham and Clifton Hampden Bypass. This would support the delivery of over 22,000 homes in Didcot, Culham, Harwell and Berinsfield. Additionally, up to £70m of cycle and other sustainable transport improvements are proposed for inclusion in the bid plan.

These deals mean we will enjoy the protection of a 3year land supply for 3years preventing unrestricted development

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS GRANT FUND

I was able to support 3 projects with my £5k Fund one in Goring (School Playgroup), one in South Stoke (play equipment) & one that covered both Parish's (GAP festival).

GARDEN WASTE COLLECTION

South Oxfordshire district councils are giving those who are part of the paid-for service the opportunity to put out the equivalent of one extra bin's worth of garden waste (around three large bin bags) during:

- week commencing 9 April – South Oxfordshire

South Local Plan 2033

This has still to be approved to proceed to the inspector stage, councillors are still discussing which strategic sites should be included.

Countdown to new community lottery with £25,000 jackpot up for grabs

Tickets for South Oxfordshire District Council's exciting new community lottery will go on sale on Tuesday 27 March.

The online SO Charitable Lottery will raise funds for local voluntary and charitable groups and a new website www.socharitable.co.uk is now live for people to find out more.

Tickets cost £1 and need to be bought via the website. The first draw will take place on 28 April and will then run weekly. There is a one in 50 chance of winning a prize, with a jackpot of £25,000.

From each ticket bought, 60p will go to good causes and the local community

£1.55 million available to boost rural areas in the county

Grants of up to £100,000 are available to community groups, small businesses farmers and foresters for projects that support the rural economy.

The Oxfordshire LEADER fund aims to support a wide range of activities in the countryside such as assisting local small businesses, supporting local heritage and cultural events, attracting tourism and visitors increasing foresters and farmer's productivity and helping to diversify services.

Contributions are available for capital costs such as building work, equipment and for projects located in the Oxfordshire LEADER area until September this year.

Permanent chief executive appointed

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have appointed Mark Stone as their permanent Chief Executive. Mark has spent a successful six months as Acting Chief Executive. His appointment was approved by councillors at Vale of White Horse District Council's full council meeting on 13 December and South Oxfordshire District Council's full council meeting on 14 December, following a rigorous interview process with the two councils' Joint Staff Committee.

CONTACT DETAILS



Kevin Bulmer

District Councillor

Goring & South Stoke Ward

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Rail Electrification in the Goring Gap

Update for Goring Annual Parish Meeting 10th April 2018

2017 has been extremely frustrating with regards to any progress on mitigating the visual impact of the electrification works on the landscape surrounding South Stoke and Goring. The agreed Public Consultation to be held in Feb/March 2017 was postponed at the last minute by Network Rail as the Design Advisory Group (Chilterns Conservation Board, North Wessex Downs Conservation Board and other statutory bodies) and the Railway Action Group (RAG) concluded that the proposed new gantry designs that were to be shown, were too limited in choice and were not sufficiently different enough to those we already have to make any meaningful difference in terms of the impact on the landscape. Plans for a new consultation exercise were proposed for later in 2017.

On 19th October at a meeting in Goring chaired by John Howell MP, senior Network Rail managers told RAG that they were once again delaying local consultation meetings they had originally planned for earlier this year and that any new consultations would not be before spring 2018; recent communications imply that these will not now take place until the end of 2018.

The only good news is that meetings are still taking place between Network Rail and the Design Advisory Group and a programme is in place to mitigate the impact of the gantries. These discussions include changing out some of the gantries for sleeker versions, structural changes to 'declutter' the gantries eg lowering some of the wires and shortening the upright stanchions, screening them with planting and tinting the metal work.

In terms of the overall progress of the electrification of the Great Western Railway in the area then the wires went live in mid 2017 and the first slow trains (EMUs) came into service between London and Didcot in early 2018. These stop at Didcot as the onward section to Oxford has not been electrified (and there is no current timetable for doing so). However, there are a limited number of through diesel services from Goring to Oxford at peak times. The fast trains ie IETs, are all hybrids with some running in electric mode to Didcot and then onward to Bristol and Cardiff in diesel mode. This will continue until late 2018 at least when electrification from Didcot to Bristol is scheduled for completion.

Report from:

MIGGS

Mobility Issues Group for Goring & Streatley

The aim and purpose of MIGGS is to exchange information and represent the interests of residents of Goring, Streatley and surrounding communities who have limited mobility; and to raise and disburse money for that purpose.

1 Wallingford Road pavement – pedestrian safety

- 1.1 In cooperation with the parish council and with the support of other official and voluntary bodies MIGGS has made representations to Network Rail, Great Western Railway and Oxfordshire County Council, as the highway authority, to increase the width of the pavement on the west side of Wallingford Road, between High Street and Reading Road. This is to enable wheelchair users to pass safely to and from the station booking office. Widening of the pavement would, of course, also help other pedestrians, especially parents with prams and pushchairs.
- 1.2 For the past two years we have been told that there is no foreseeable prospect of having a full width pavement installed because Network Rail is not responsible for the highway and OCC Highways appears not to regard it as a high priority. So MIGGS has pursued a compromise option that involves removal of the rusty rail crash barrier and erection of a new railway boundary fence along a line closer to the track. This would have enabled the pavement to be widened to 1200-1300mm, about half the normal pavement width.
- 1.3 On the basis of a meeting on 12 March¹ between Oxfordshire Highways, Network Rail, MIGGS and the chairman of the parish council, this approach may prove to have been unduly pessimistic. Thus, following this meeting, Oxfordshire Highways announced that:
 - a) The County Council will seek to investigate the potential for a number of tasks along this section of the public highway. These include:
 - i The removal of the original fence that is covered in ivy.
 - ii The potential for the extension of the green palisade fence (owned and maintained by Network Rail).
 - iii A feasibility study to determine if a vehicle restraint system is required along the section that currently has the rusty old fence.
 - iv Structural patching of the highway surface adjacent to the footway as this is in a poor condition.
 - v Removal of the vegetation (adjacent to the footway) to open the width of the highway up to its full potential.
 - vi Re-centering of the white line in the highway to re-balance the carriageway split.
 - vii A gully cleaning session to empty the drains of silt.
 - viii The widening of the footway to ensure that pedestrians no longer have to walk in the road.
 - ix Alterations to the Network Rail owned vehicle restraint barrier to make the end safer at the bridge end².
 - b) Due to the cross service operations that will be required to get this scheme together we cannot give any timeframes for the initial costs/works start dates etc at this point in time.
 - c) We envisage a number of options that we will have to then consider from a financial and safety perspective.

¹ That is to say, after the draft Regulation 15 version of the Goring neighbourhood plan was completed.

² This item refers to an elbow in the modern crash barrier that forms part of the High Street road bridge structure. This elbow projects over the pavement at face level and is a hazard for wheelchair passengers.

- d) As soon as we have any further information we will let you know.
- 1.4 MIGGS has sought further clarification over timing and if a response is received in time this will be reported to the meeting.
- 1.5 MIGGS has asked the parish council to continue to earmark funds already committed to supporting the pavement improvements.
- 1.6 MIGGS continues to hold £5,000 in local voluntary donations towards ancillary cost of the works.

2 Goring neighbourhood plan

MIGGS is reassured that the following have been incorporated into or acknowledged in the draft Regulation 15 version of the Goring neighbourhood plan:

- a) Policy 19 – walking and cycling – to “provide safe pedestrian access to link up with existing or proposed pathways and cycle routes, ensuring that residents, *including those with disabilities*, can walk or cycle safely to village amenities”.
- b) The importance of good pedestrian *and wheelchair* access to site GNP 6 – land between Wallingford Road and Springhill Road – should that site be recommended for housing development
- c) A proposed safety review “to ensure that the impact of road access onto Wallingford Road is fully considered in terms of traffic passing, entering and leaving the junction, cycle access and pedestrian access *including pedestrians with mobility issues and pedestrians walking to and from the site along Wallingford Road*”.
- d) A proposal (Action 06) for improved pedestrian safety, traffic management, parking control, loading and unloading constraints in High Street, especially the proposal to “continue the footpath outside Mary S in a raised form around to the footpath to Wheel Orchard Car Park, to act as an obstacle encouraging drivers not to mount the footpath or cut the corner tightly and to enable *wheelchair users and other pedestrians* to assess traffic in both directions before crossing the road”.
- e) The work done to highlight the risks to pedestrians from the narrow pavement in Wallingford Road and to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility there; in particular, proposed Action 07: “The Plan supports actions to improve Wallingford Road and the public footway to facilitate *wheelchair access* to the station and to enhance pedestrian safety”.

3 “Accessible by Train” leaflet

The purpose of this leaflet, funded by Great Western Railway and the parish council, is to encourage mobility impaired visitors to see Goring and Streatley station as their gateway to the Goring Gap. “With its fully accessible facilities the station is the ideal starting point for visitors with limited mobility to sample the river and countryside of the Thames valley”, the leaflet points out. The leaflet, which has the support of both AONBs and National Trails (which manages the Ridgeway and Thames long distance paths) is practically complete and ready for printing. Under the terms of the GWR grant the leaflet should have been printed by the end of March but it has been held up pending clarification by the railway regulator, the Office of Road and Rail, of its “Assisted travel” policy. In view of this GWR has waived the printing deadline condition and the leaflet will now be printed as soon as definitive guidance is received from the regulator.

4 Readibus Goring service

Since 2013 the Readibus shopping bus service for elderly and disabled people has been funded by MIGGS and the parish council. We have raised enough in local donations to commit to continue supporting the service until the end of March 2019 at least. We hope the parish council will continue with its support also. Money contributed by the council and raised by MIGGS goes exclusively to the Goring service, the core costs of the Readibus charity being paid mainly by Reading and other large councils, with fares of national bus pass holders in Goring subsidised by OCC.

Goring Gap in Bloom has now entered the Thames and Chilterns Britain in Bloom competition five times. We are pleased to report that our strategy of tackling and improving the uncared for and unattractive areas of the village helped us achieve our 3rd Gold award in 2017, with our highest ever score of 173 points out of 200. The award was presented in Amersham in September. Our wonderful team of volunteers is dedicated to improving the village for everyone and I would like to start this report by thanking them and our excellent committee for their part in the continuing success of Goring Gap in Bloom.

The committee would like to thank the council for its financial support, without which there would be no hanging baskets. By planting and maintaining the hanging baskets ourselves we save the Goring rate payers 50% of their cost and their care. We raise a considerable amount of our funds ourselves, mainly from our regular plant sale and grants – the GGN has been particularly generous over the years and we are also grateful to the Gatehampton Trust. The money we raise is spent on the various enhancements that you see around the village. Our work on the station and the BT site has been largely funded by our own efforts as BT and GWR have been unable to contribute, although of course we are delighted to report that after several years of persistent nagging we have now managed to get the ear of BT's Managing Director and the unsightly fence by the footpath has at last been replaced (we believe largely thanks to the threat of national exposure on the BBC)!

Contrary to the popular belief that the RHS Britain in Bloom competition is all about flowers the assessment for the awards is made on the basis of achievement in three distinct categories.

Firstly, and the most obvious, is **Horticultural Achievement**, of which you will be aware through our work planting up and caring for the 45 hanging baskets and the various containers throughout the village. This category includes the regeneration, cultivation and care of neglected areas in various parts of Goring including, most recently, the areas around the BT site and the planting on Platform 4 of the station, although due to some major hurdles that we had to overcome the latter wasn't completed until after the judges had visited.

Secondly, we are judged on **Environmental Responsibility**. This involves local environmental quality, such as tackling graffiti, litter, fly posting, grot spots and dog fouling. The judges are always looking for indications of 'pride of place.' Management of street furniture, signage and hard landscaping as well as conservation and biodiversity and local heritage are therefore taken into account. We believe that the level of vandalism and litter has been reduced significantly in the areas where we have introduced planting but in this category we were disappointed to be criticised for the poor condition of some items of our street furniture. With your help in getting repairs and maintenance done to signposts, bollards and kerbs etc, we hope to improve on this in 2018 as we can only get these issues resolved with the persistence of the Parish Council as we have no clout with SODC and OCC.

The last category on which we are judged is **Community Participation**, which includes working with the school, businesses, the shops and of course GPC amongst many others. Withymead nature reserve is a great example of how other community groups work with us to strengthen our entry in the competition and the volunteer parents in the school garden are truly inspirational. I am pleased to report that Goring Gap in Bloom has recruited even more volunteers this year, although we still have a shortfall in the rota for the watering of the hanging baskets. We work hard on our publicity, with regular articles in the GGN and the Henley Standard and we have a website and a YouTube film of our work in 2017 which has reached an international audience. We are delighted to report that a few months ago we received an email from a keen gardener in San Diego who, having seen our work

on the internet wishes to visit Goring this summer when our village is looking at its best. On our advice she will be here in July when we will be delighted to show her around.

We have been visited by other communities looking for guidance in starting up groups like ours, which is very gratifying, as was the recommendation by the RHS that we should be auditioned by the BBC for the TV show. The Goring programme will be aired on 3rd May on BBC2 at 6.30. We are told by the producers that Goring looks beautiful in the film so we anticipate that we will have even more visitors this year to enjoy the flowers, our lovely scenery and our incredible festival. In preparation for this scrutiny and for the 2018 competition we would like to use this opportunity to ask for the Council's support in ensuring that the village looks particularly well cared for this summer. Thank you.

Stephanie Bridle

Chairman