

GORING-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

We aim to serve in the best interests of our community

MINUTES – PARISH ANNUAL MEETING

Meeting of the Parish Annual Meeting for 2014-2015, held on Wednesday 15th April 2015

In the Belleme Room, Village Hall, Goring at 7:30pm

Present: Cllrs A Strong (Chairman), Parish Councillors; Kevin Bulmer (Vice Chairman), Mary Bulmer, Lawrie Reavill, Emrhys Barrell, John Wills, Catherine Hall. Clerks; Peter Clegg and Colin Ratcliff and 74 members of the public and the press.

The Chairman advised the meeting that the public and the media have a right to record meetings of the Council. Members of the public and press confirmed that they would not be taking audio or visual recordings of the meeting.

1. Chairman's welcome

The Chairman welcomed all present and said this was the first Annual Meeting of Goring-on-Thames Parish Council due to the name change in the past year.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 16th April 2014

The minutes, having been displayed on the Parish Council website and distributed immediately before the meeting were approved as presented.

3. Matters arising from those minutes

Mr Bernard Clucas disputed that the name change to Goring-on-Thames had actually occurred as he believed that the commencement order was made on 28 February 2015 and only came into force on 7 May 2015.

The Chairman responded that the Council did not have the same information and believed the change was valid.

4. Annual Report

(Appendix A)

The Chairman highlighted areas of his report.

He mentioned that Freedom of Information decision notices are available on the Information Commissioner's website.

He highlighted road resurfacing was completed at White Hill Burial Ground. There are plans to improve Gardiner Pavilion with £50,000 set aside for the first phase and dependent on availability of grants that a further £50,000 could be available for the second phase.

He mentioned graffiti vandalism at Sheepcot where an offender was prosecuted.

A defibrillator is planned for the Village Hall and he thanked the Hall Committee for its support.

On the need for a further 86 houses in Goring-on-Thames he discussed that area GOR1 had been put forward but none of the proposed areas were completely acceptable, some less than others but all had some problems. There had been two previous South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) exhibitions in the village prior to March and it was felt the majority at the exhibitions preferred that site. Requests for resurfacing of roads and pavements had been sent to Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) three or four times.

He discussed the Amenities Association requests for play equipment and plans to liaise with Streatley Recreation Ground.

In the summer there had been a proliferation of advertising boards and the Council obtained approval to remove them. Manholes have been replaced to assist with flooding problems at Ferry Lane / Grange Close. The Tesco planning application awaits its next stage.

The precept has been increased this year although the budget is still set for a deficit.

He thanked Peter Clegg, retiring clerk for his years of service and welcomed Colin Ratcliff as his replacement.

The Chairman then asked for questions on his report.

Mr Stuart Whiteman asked if any response had been received from SODC about the Development Plan.

The Chairman replied not since the consultation period ended on 2 April.

Mr Bernard Clucas asked if the Chairman's report had been approved by the Parish Council. The Chairman replied that it is his own report but it had been seen by Councillors.

Mr Clucas then spoke about the Freedom of Information Act and advised the public to not rely on what the report for 2014-15 said, that it is ridiculously biased and misleading. He had made 8 complaints in 2012-2013, each one led to a formal decision that the Parish Council had broken the law. He complained about the cost of the Council's response and that they had spent on unnecessary legal advice.

The chairman disputed all of Mr Clucas' allegations and asked if there were any other comments from the public about the Freedom of Information Act but none were forthcoming.

Mr Martin Smith felt the cost of replacing play equipment at Bourdillon Field was expensive at £1,625. The Chairman stated the Council agreed but there were no alternative suppliers available.

Mr Tom Worthington commented that since the road surface at White Hill Burial Ground had been resurfaced one of the gates would not close and suggested a height barrier may be useful to prevent unauthorised access.

Mr John Boler said he had asked SODC and had been told there was an embargo on all politically sensitive planning applications until after the election and that was a reason why Tesco's had been held back.

Mrs Stephanie Bridle said she had also contacted SODC and had been told no site visit had yet been held.

Jane Dexter asked if a date had been set for an Extraordinary Council Meeting regarding a Neighbourhood Plan (NHP). The Chairman stated that the Council had obtained advice from the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC) that this is a decision that should be left to the new council and therefore no meeting will be held until the new Council convenes on 18 May.

Dr Sarah Morton commented on a vote having taken place at the last Council Meeting to hold an Extraordinary Meeting. This was disputed by the Chairman.

Mr Tom Rothwell asked if the question and answer regarding the advice would be available to the public, the Chairman replied it would be if requested.

Mrs Stephanie Bridle asked if the advice had come from the Legal and Democratic Department of SODC as they are the same body as the plan. It was confirmed the advice came from OALC and not SODC.

Cllr. Emrhys Barrell commented that he proposed a motion at the last Council meeting but he did not know whether it had been seconded. The Chairman noted the comment and restated there had not been a vote and repeated the advice against him calling an Extraordinary Meeting.

Dr Morton explained there was a strength of feeling in the village, supported by the attendance at this meeting and was disappointed to hear there would be no Extraordinary Meeting. She reiterated in detail the need for a Neighbourhood Plan to support future development and asked what can be done now.

Cllr. Kevin Bulmer explained some of the history as to why the Village does not currently have a NHP, the decision was made to not be in the initial rush to prepare one and to see what mistakes others areas might make. There have been unintended outcomes and development approved on sites the Neighbourhood Plan doesn't support. He suggested an open meeting could be held to discuss a NHP depending on the views of the villagers, once the new

Council is in place. Volunteers would need to be prepared to do this and Parish Council agreement will depend on the views of the new Councillors.

Discussions followed on timescales and it was suggested there is no reason why preparatory work cannot be commenced by supporters in the meantime.

The Chairman summarised the discussion and following a suggestion from Mr Martin Smith it was agreed a provisional date for an open meeting be booked at the main room of the Village Hall in late May / early June.

Mrs Sally Wicks asked about the relationship between the Amenities Association and the Parish Council as they do not always have the same agenda. The Chairman answered that they are different types of body and although there is often agreement, that may not always be the case and all have their right to a view.

Cllr. Barrell commented that SODC had prepared four sites and recommended that GOR1 should not be used on the grounds of landscape. Mr Phillip Hughes said that SODC had put on their website they had withdrawn their previous objection.

Mr Rothwell was concerned about minute taking and that no record had been made of some FOI issues. The Chairman did not accept that.

Cllr. Barrell suggested all Parish Council Meetings should be audio recorded and the Chairman said that was a matter for the new Council to decide.

5. District Councillor's Report

(Appendix B)

The report had been circulated and there were no comments.

6. County Councillor's Report

Cllr. Kevin Bulmer said he produces a detailed report each month for the Parish Council on OCC activities. Copies are available on the website or via the office. He highlighted the lack of response from OCC to requests to resurface roads and has spoken to the Cabinet Member responsible who will look into the matter. He discussed budget issues and that a new financial year has started so there may be money available.

Mrs Bridle asked if pressure can be put on OCC to review the professional safety assessment done for STIG that OCC Highways have rejected. Cllr. Bulmer said he

had asked once but will do so again.

7. Reports from local organisations

MIGGS - Mr John Boler conveyed thanks to the outgoing Parish Council for its consistently positive and constructive attitude towards the needs of disabled and mobility impaired residents and they hope that the new Council, when elected, will continue with this approach.

8. Public Forum

Mr Smith commented that regarding GOR1 a report to SODC by an outside body suggested the area was environmentally sensitive. The field had crops until 2 years ago, most failed, and it is now left as weed so cannot be environmentally sensitive.

Mr David Watts commented that due to the number of houses, residents and vehicles, having one site for development may form a community within itself and not be part of the village.

Mrs Bridle was concerned extension of the village envelope may lead to additional development on the opposite side of the road.

Mr David Sintella commented that both SODC consultations were in school holidays so had restricted villager's contributions.

Mr David Lewis asked the Council to consider how meetings are advertised and to think about electronic communication.

Mr Rothwell commented there had been insufficient consultation by SODC and asked if there could be legal grounds to contest that. The Chairman agreed the Council would ask SODC for comments.

9. There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8:49pm.