

HORSPATH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 26th April 2023
at 7.30pm in Horspath Village Hall.

Present: Mr D Burgess Mrs P Cook Mr L Coolman Mr P Ewart Mr I Harris Mrs B Oakley (Chairman) Mr P O'Brien Mrs C Riley Mrs H Kogel, Clerk	Apologies: Mr B Igoe, Mr E Parker
	Absent: Mr T Bearder (County Councillor) Mrs E Gillespie (District Councillor)
	Public: 15

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.** – Apologies were given on behalf of Mr Igoe and Mr Parker. Mr Bearder and Mrs Gillespie were absent from the meeting.
- 2. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL.**
The minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on Tuesday 26th April 2022, were approved and signed by the Chairman as correct.
- 3. STATEMENT OF PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS 2022/23 – Un-audited.**
A statement of un-audited accounts for 2022/23 was circulated. No questions were asked.
- 4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – Mrs Beverley Oakley.**
An interesting 12 months for HPC. Following the resignation of 5 Councillors all within 6 months, 5 new Councillors were co-opted.
A full review of councils Standing Orders took place and these have been updated. Several other policies are also in the process of being updated.
A number of purchases have been made. These include flower tubs with plants at the entrance to the village and by the memorial, and an additional tub will be planted for King Charles's Coronation. Two noticeboards will be delivered tomorrow, one for Gateley and one to replace the existing one on the green by the shop. Thanks to Mrs Riley for painting the bus shelter at Gateley in preparation for the new noticeboard. Two benches have been purchased, one by the memorial and one soon to be sited in the burial ground, a flagpole kindly donated by Toni Yates has been erected also near the memorial. A defibrillator for residents at the top of Gidley Way has been delivered to the manager's office at the Berkeley mobile home site and should be installed within the next two weeks. Training courses will be organised for residents to learn how to use the defibrillator. Football goals and nets have been delivered and we are currently waiting for them to be installed.
Mr O'Brien has been in contact several times with the HR Company engaged by the previous Parish Councillors requesting copies of information regarding contracts etc, unfortunately these documents are yet to be received.
In January an open village meeting was held regarding the possibility of building a new Village Hall. All residents received a letter suggesting this proposal. Following the village meeting Mr O'Brien met the Planning Officer to decide viability of size and siting. The report from the Planning Officer regarding this meeting is still outstanding.
There is no further update regarding the Northfield housing estate and no formal planning application has been made.

HPC has registered for OCC's 20mph scheme, and OCC has stated that the scheme should be implemented within the next 18 months.

The Parish Council have been very fortunate with the support from so many volunteers engaged in numerous tasks around the village including the litter collection on 1st April 2023.

My sincere thanks to Keith Brooks for planting bulbs by the memorial, Bob Surman for the erection of the flagpole and several other tasks, Martin Harris for attending so many planning meetings on behalf of HPC. Bob and Jayne Hamlet and Michelle Thompson who always help with many tasks, Bob Gamble who has been totally instrumental in reporting the numerous potholes around the village, Rob Gray who does a considerable amount of grass cutting round the village, Max Eason and his team for ensuring the recreation field always look the very best. Thanks also to Pete Aries for posting the notices on the noticeboard and for keeping the bus shelter tidy. Finally, my most sincere thanks to fellow Councillors for all they have done over the past 6 months and especially Hayley Kogel our Clerk who has worked tirelessly to make my position as Chair-person so much easier.

5. VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE'S REPORT AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS. – Treasurer, Horspath Village Hall.

A copy of the report and statement of accounts 2022/23 from HVHMC was circulated to all residents and Councillors. No questions were asked.

6. HORSPATH STONE PIT CHARITY STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS.

A copy of the un-audited 2022/23 accounts was circulated to all Parish Councillors and members of the public, no questions were asked.

Mrs Oakley gave the following report:-

After the co-option of the new Parish Councillors they all became Trustees of HSPC. Trustees decided a full review of the grant process was necessary and this resulted in the cancellation of the Infrastructure Fund and a temporary suspension of the grant system. The new grants were re-introduced in March and several grants have been made.

HSPC has awarded £37,017.11 in grants during the last financial year, these include grants to organisations and individuals as well as swimming lesson grants, Yenworthy grants, school transport grants, and school uniform grants to children in the village. A total of £2,621.00 was also issued in supermarket vouchers for the Hardship Fund which is still part of HSPC.

After advertising for additional Independent Advisors, Mr Hamlet and Mrs Franklin were appointed and joined the Trustees. These Advisors are impartial 'consultants' ensuring that HSPC is accurate and transparent in assessing grant applications, my thanks to them both.

In February 2022 a meal voucher scheme was introduced for any full-time Horspath residents who receive the UK state pension. The voucher (£12.00) could be used at the Queens Head or at the Gurkha Palace. My sincere thanks to Jason, Mama Thai, and Prem. Some of the vouchers were used by the housebound and a 'take away' meal delivery service was established. Sadly in March, The Gurkha Palace pulled out of the scheme but thankfully the Queens Head continues to offer a very substantial meal deal. There has been mostly a favourable reaction and many residents are now 'regulars' at the Queens Head. We are extremely hopeful that following Mama Thai's resignation the new chef will continue with the scheme.

A grant was given to John Underdown to produce a new village newsletter, now called "From the Horse's Mouth. We wish John and his helpers continued success with this venture.

HSPC were pleased to give a grant to the Friends of Horspath for a village tea party in celebration of Queen Elizabeth's Jubilee, and a further grant has been given for a village tea party to be held on 8th May 2023 to celebrate King Charles's Coronation. All residents are encouraged to attend.

A resident has requested that all villagers are canvassed to ascertain how HSPC money should be used. A list of potential projects could be made with a possible timescale. The resident is hopeful that

all residents can raise any topic they deem to be important which would be of benefit to all sections of the community.

Finally, my sincere thanks for all the kind comments regarding the work carried out by the Trustees in the past 6 months. All grant application forms can be found on the HSPC website.

7. HORSPATH RECREATION CHARITY STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS.

A copy of the 2022/23 accounts was circulated to all Parish Councillors and members of the public, no questions were asked.

8. FRIENDS OF HORSPATH – Report from Sheila Frankum.

We have had a very busy year starting with a Spring Market, the very successful Platinum Jubilee tea party combined with the Photo Exhibition of Horspath during Queen Elizabeth's Reign. At the same time, we also had an Art Exhibition from the Art class and the Sculpture group. We have installed a new carpet and professionally cleaned the floors. A projector has been installed on the ceiling making it so much easier for talks, classes, meetings and films. The Scarecrow Trail went ahead in conjunction with St Giles Church and is now becoming an established fun family event throughout the area. We then had an Apple Day which was new event, but again many people attended and thoroughly enjoyed drinking and eating anything connected with the humble apple. The Annual Remembrance refreshments were held at the Hub and 2022 finished with our notable Christmas market.

We began the New Year with the garden refurbishment and although started, it has a long way to go. Our Usual classes and groups have continued to be well attended Yoga, Pilates, Line Dancing Table Tennis, Wine Club, Arts and Crafts groups, Creative Writing, Senior Residents, and the Age UK Film Club.

It is always good to support new ideas. The start of the new Horspath Magazine is just one example and we have been delighted with its response and the varied articles that have been involved. Thanks to the editors for their hard work. Also, the Wellness Class, Computer Confidence, Art Matters, Babies First, a Dance Group and Sunday Activities with Children for St Giles, are all new ventures and we have welcomed them and given whatever support they have needed.

Of course, our Post Office and Friday morning Café continues to be very popular and very necessary for many of our villagers. We are very grateful for the volunteers who run the café, set up the tables, make the cakes, and serve during the morning. We are especially grateful to Neil who organises the taxi service that makes sure many of our more elderly residents are able to attend and enjoy the chat, as well as the coffee and cake.

There are many private meetings, celebrations, and talks that take place at the Hub throughout the year and we wouldn't be able to organise all of those without our efficient Webmaster Geoff Ryman.

This very busy and wonderful facility that we purchased almost 10 years ago is proving to be a great asset to Horspath in many different ways and the Trustees of the Friends who have worked hard throughout this time to make the Hub a success are grateful for the support we have had from the village and other organisations. We have managed to pay back 80% of the loans, which we feel is quite an achievement. We now want to finish the garden to enhance the facility and are looking forward to the Coronation Tea, a Spring Market, and a Talk from Menson Bound.

It is however with great sadness that we have to report that Lawrence Brown lost his battle with Parkinson's last weekend. He was a tremendous support for this village and especially the Hub. He was Chairman for many years.

9. SODC COUNCILOR'S REPORT – Mrs Elizabeth Gillespie. – No report available.

10. OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – Mr Tim Bearder.

Mr Bearder sent the following report:-

Many of you are having AGM's this month - some have already happened, and others are yet to come so I thought I'd pull together a report from my County and for some of my District duties.

I'm delighted to see that so many of you re-standing and in most cases being re-elected unopposed. The communities rely on your dedication and commitment given freely and it has been great working with many of you. For those standing down, thank you for all you have done.

I have done a lot of door knocking in the last few weeks and it won't surprise you that potholes are coming up frequently.

Roads everywhere are a problem; the fact is it costs £45m/year to maintain the Oxfordshire's road network, we receive £15m and the previous Conservative administration borrowed £80m over five years to top that up to the tune of £15m a year. That still means we are £15m short and there is a cliff edge in 24/25 when the budget will drop to the allocation from government. Another tranche of borrowing is unpalatable and probably unaffordable given it costs £800,000/£10m borrowed for 25 years.

We are making efficiency savings and protecting highways maintenance as best we can. We identified £30million of savings to release funding for the priorities highlighted in our consultation with residents and those enabled us not to make the cuts initially identified.

We have put £2.3m back into future funds for highway maintenance

We have put £800,000 back into the fire service vehicle reserve.

We have put £150,000 back into libraries.

Instead of pausing maintenance for a year in some of our buildings, we will keep it going so as to reduce costs in the longer run.

Money can't be shift from what many see as 'vanity projects' like bus gates in the city because that is being paid for by ring-fenced Governmental bus improvement grants.

Most of those traffic reductions schemes were planned, the money was applied for, and the installation overseen by the previous administration as outlined in this article written in March

2021: <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/19186944.oxford-councillor-will-still-get-jams-even-electric-cars/>

Government has just given us £3m one off unexpected funding for potholes. This will be spent but it is an ongoing deteriorating problem that won't be addressed by these kinds of random payments. We are getting a third of what is required to maintain the network and that is a serious and worsening issue.

I am very proud of the 20mph scheme in general and would like to thank the Parishes for their support in requesting it and working with officers on behalf of the villages to bring about some speedy installation. All the parishes in my Division other than Wheatley and Cuddesdon have applied, and I believe that Wheatley have plans to do so.

I was pleased to be able to continue to support the Maple Tree activities, Wheatley Oaks Women's Football Team and various traffic measures through my Priorities Fund from the County Council and cycling, hedge planting and children's reading projects with my District fund - new schemes will shortly be open and I am always interested in innovative ways that I can spend it in the community - please get in touch.

On the District we have done a lot of work over the last four years to steady the ship and get the finances back in order. We've turned a £3.2m deficit into a £700,000 deficit. We were hit by COVID, the cost-of-living crisis and the fallout from the Ukrainian war and risen to the challenge exceptionally well, but lots more work needs to be done.

Much is made of the proposed £25m new HQ in Didcot. That is the potential cost of our part of a wider urban regeneration project which will include 144 flats, a public park and cafe as well as our new offices. The previous administration did not address a long-term solution and had the Council temporarily housed in expensive rental accommodation on Milton Park that was totally unaffordable. It is important to mention that we have £5m of insurance receipts and still own the land of the former offices, both of which should be considered offset against this overall figure.

It is clear to me we need a modern space for staff as Working From Home is not suitable for many Council functions and we will receive a better service for residents if we move.

We are still working to release ourselves from many of the outsourced contracts taken up by the previous administration - the bin collection which is carried out by Biffa experienced disruption during the driver shortage which we were powerless to prevent - by contrast in Eastleigh, where I have also served as a Councillor, we retained in-house bin collection and did not suffer any noticeable disruption. That is clearly a place we want to get to and we are working towards that but it takes time if we are to avoid substantial contractual costs.

It is worth noting that having served my four-year term in Eastleigh I am not seeking re-election there. I am delighted by the way so many in the community have stepped in to help people in the Ukrainian crisis but want to particularly mention the Council staff who have done an amazing job owning the challenge of host payments, inspections and looking after families when the inevitable but difficult rehousing requirements arise.

Finally, you will have seen our robust response to Oxford City Council's outrageous attempt to gerrymander future housing numbers knowing that the Districts will then be forced to meet their unmet need. So many of the intolerable pressures we are facing stem from decisions taken years before to allow an unhinged level of growth to be imposed on this County. Road wear and tear, traffic volumes and environmental pressures like sewage in our rivers all exacerbated by more and more housing. We are simply holding the wheel when most of these plans are being realised and the housing is starting to be built out, but we will ensure that the future plans that we make are considerate of the environment, climate change and the impact on existing residents. We are working on a new joint Local Plan with the Vale and this will minimise the housing numbers and impose the most robust environmental standards allowed. I look forward to working with many going forward.

11. NEW VILLAGE HALL. – Update.

Mr O'Brien reported that he met with Sharon Crawford, SODC Planning Officer around 4 weeks ago, which was very positive. Sharon Crawford is due to send a report following the meeting but is now away until 3rd May 2023. Mrs Oakley stated that the problem with SODC staff is that the majority of staff are working from home. Mr O'Brien stated that the CEO wants staff to work from home and does not want them to return to work in the offices. Mr O'Brien stated that HPC gets no service from SODC. A vote was taken in Horspath village on 10th January 2023, and it took the Planners all that time to get back to us to arrange a meeting. HPC paid over £900.00 to SODC for a 30 minute meeting, which was a discounted cost for Parish Councils. Mr O'Brien had to insist on being a site meeting and not a Zoom meeting.

12. AOB.

- a. Mr Ewart informed Councillors and residents that he will not be standing in the Election this year. He has been a Councillor for over 13 years, which at times has been very challenging. Mr Ewart wished Councillors all success for the future. Mrs Oakley and other Councillors thanked Mr Ewart for his help and support over the years.

Public:-

- b. Mrs Oakley asked Mrs Gray to pass on thanks from HPC to Rob Gray for cutting the grass.
- c. Mrs Walker asked if there is any possibility of fibre broadband being installed in the village. Mrs Oakley stated that residents will all need to write in to request this service. Mr Burgess stated that optical fibre is already in the telephone cabinets but there is a high charge to install it into households. Mrs Oakley agreed that HPC will look into the possibility of fibre broadband.
- d. Mrs Legg stated that there are multiple people in the village reporting potholes, not just Mr Gambles. Any resident can report potholes on FixMyStreet. Mrs Oakley stated that Mr Gambles attended a meeting with OCC's Area Steward to inspect the potholes in the village. Mrs Legg stated that OCC has 28 days to fix potholes after they have been reported. Mr Brooks stated that the pothole by the bridge

was recently repaired and has re-appeared 4 weeks later. Mrs Legg stated that HPC should inform OCC when that happens so that it can be raised with the Contractor.

- e. A resident from Wheatley stated that Wheatley also have the same problem with potholes. As a user of a mobility scooter, she has reported the problem to Mr Bearder.
- f. A resident from Toot Baldon introduced herself to Councillors and residents. She will be standing in the May Election for the Conservatives and is very passionate about helping villages.
- g. Mr Aries reported that the wall outside the Chequers Inn has been damaged at both ends. Mrs Oakley stated that this will be discussed at the May meeting.
- h. Mr Brooks stated that potholes are also a problem on footpaths as well as roads.
- i. Mr Hamlet asked if HPC has recovered any money back from Sylo HR Consultant. Mr O'Brien stated that he does not envisage HPC paying the outstanding invoice to Sylo for £2500.00. In January 2023, Sylo Beyond HR offered to reduce the outstanding invoice by 50% if the invoice. Mr O'Brien stated that there is a case for HPC to look to recover some of the money already paid to Sylo, but he does not see any point in doing so. Mr O'Brien is hopeful that he will have an update at the May meeting. Mr Hamlet asked if HPC will be going after the Parish Councillors who signed the contract with Sylo. Mr O'Brien stated that it would be more productive for HPC to move forward. Mrs Oakley stated that at one point, Sylo stated that they were taking HPC to court, but they haven't done that. Mr Brooks asked how the contract ever got signed. Mrs Oakley stated that it was a previous Councillor who signed the contract with Sylo, without consulting with the other Councillors.
- j. Mr Hamlet suggested that residents stop paying their rates as they are not repairing the potholes. Mr Hamlet stated that recently OCC contractors arrived with their machinery and filled 2 potholes, but left another 15. Mr O'Brien stated that it will take all residents to stop paying their rates until OCC provide a satisfactory service.

Mrs Oakley reminded Councillors and residents that the next Parish Council meeting will be held on Tuesday 9th May 2023 at 7.30pm.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING. – To be confirmed.

Signed Date